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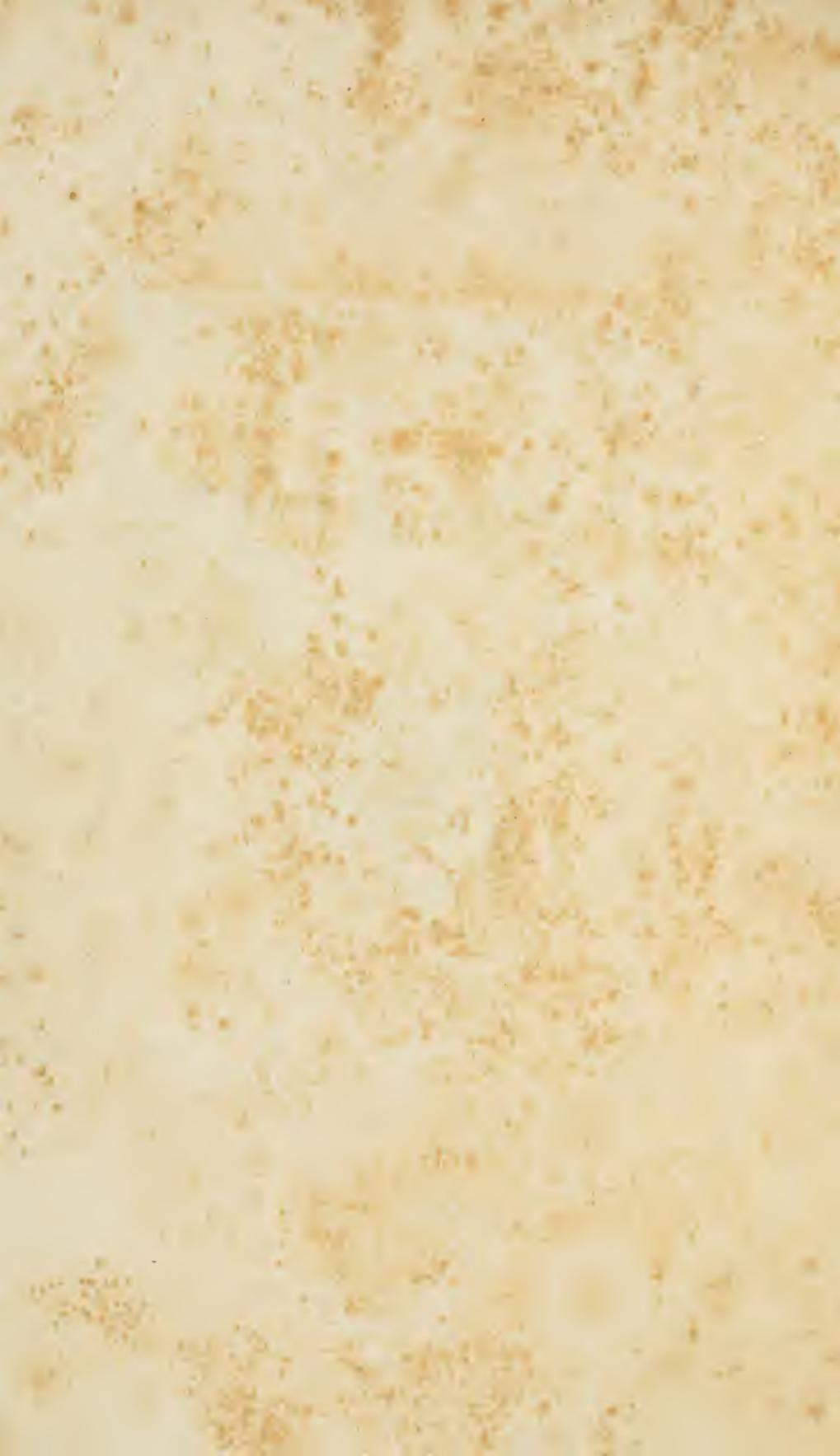
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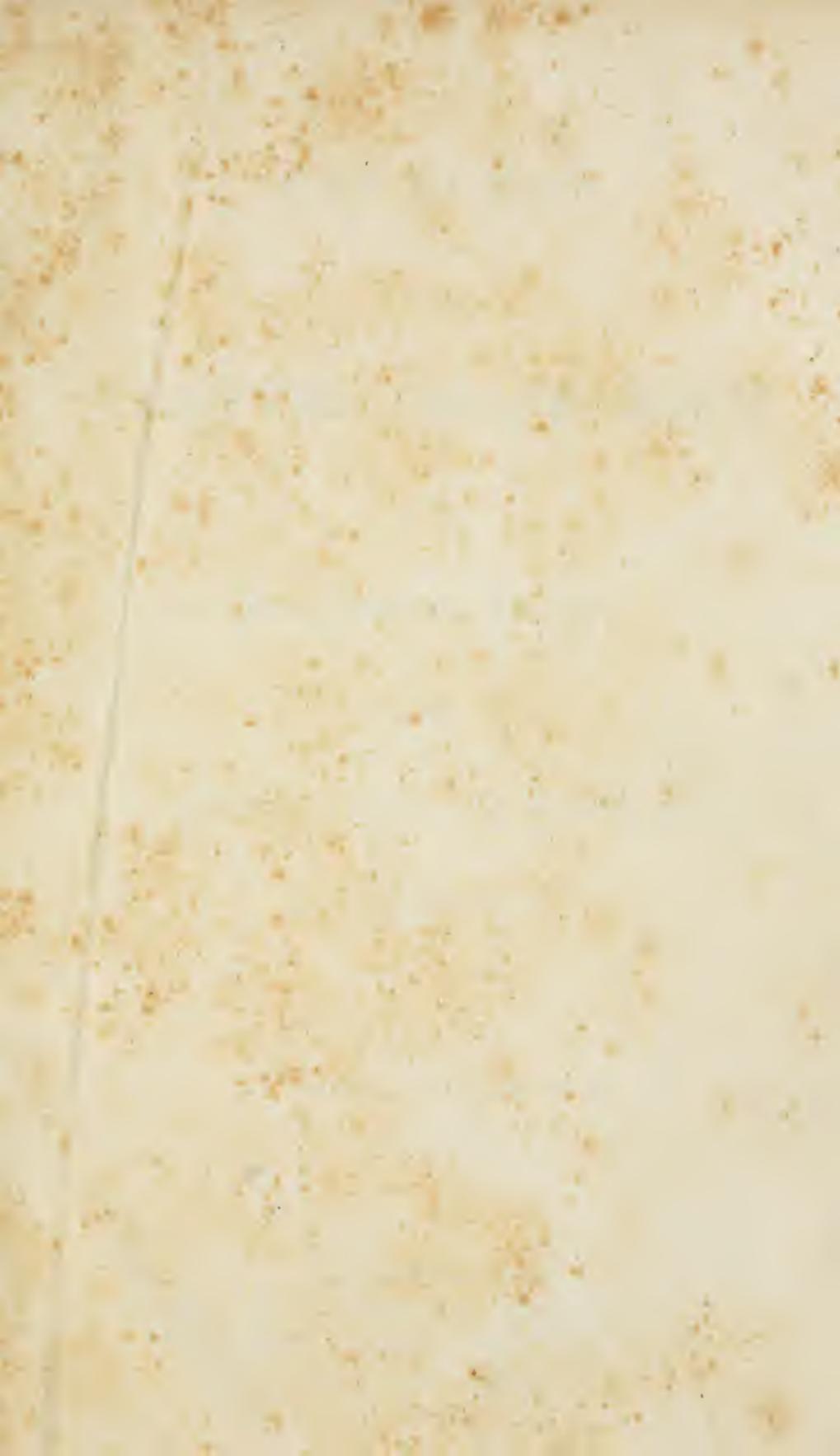
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# LECTURES

ON THE

## SHORTER CATECHISM

OF THE

Presbyterian Church,

IN THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

ADDRESSED TO YOUTH.

BY ASHBEL GREEN, D. D.

PHILADELPHIA:

A. FINLEY, CORNER OF FOURTH AND CHESNUT STREETS; E. LITTELL & BROTHER,  
136 CHESNUT STREET; AND TOWAR & HOGAN, 255 MARKET STREET.

*Clark & Raser, Printers, 33 Carter's Alley.*

1829.

*Eastern District of Pennsylvania, to wit:*

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the second day of October, in the fifty-fourth year of the independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1829, Clark & Raser, of the said district, have deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof they claim as proprietors, in the words following, to wit:

"Lectures on the Shorter Catechism of the Presbyterian Church, in the United States of America: addressed to Youth. By Ashbel Green, D. D."

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, intituled, "An Act for the Encouragement of Learning," by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therin mentioned"—And also to the act, entitled, "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, 'An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned,' and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

D. CALDWELL,  
Clerk of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.



## PREFACE.

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THE following Lectures were originally delivered to the youth of the author's pastoral charge. They are to be considered as the concluding part of a course of religious instruction, commencing with children at the dawn of intellect: and the nature and design of the lectures may perhaps best be explained, by briefly stating the process, of which they were the termination.

While memory remains, the interesting scenes will never be obliterated from the author's mind, in which he had before him the children of his congregation—from the age of three or four years, to that of ten or twelve. They were counselled, and admonished, and prayed with, in language the most simple, plain, and tender, that could be devised; and never did the speaker find the difficulty so great, in addressing any other audience, or in leading any other devotions, as in performing these duties for the lambs of his flock; in adapting his thoughts and his language to their capacities, and becoming their mouth to God. They were all taught some little forms of devotion, suited to their several ages. Some of the youngest, learned the Mother's Catechism; but, eventually, they all committed to memory that on which the lectures composing the present volume are founded. The children were divided into classes, according to the progress they had made—from those who had learned but four or five answers of the catechism, to those who could accurately repeat the whole. Of this last de-

scription of learners, a Bible class was formed,\* which met weekly in the pastor's study. The exercises of this class were introduced by an examination on the catechism, which they were required to repeat throughout; to this succeeded the recitation of their Bible lesson, accompanied by explanations from the pastor, and the answering of such questions as any member of the class was disposed to propose to him—A short address and a prayer closed the whole.

The Catechumens thus instructed, soon, of course, reached the years of maturity; finished their education, which, in many instances, was of a very liberal kind; and were preparing to enter on business for themselves, and to become heads of families. It then occurred to the author, that he might render an additional service to these youth, as important, probably, as any he had previously performed. This service consisted in addressing to them the lectures which are now presented to the publick. They were delivered to young persons, male and female, who had already been instructed in religion, and the most of whom had been considerably improved by reading and study. They were therefore no longer children. They rather formed an audience more than ordinarily capable of fully understanding the lectures which compose the present volume. The audience, indeed, soon became pretty large and promiscuous; for the lectures were delivered in a church, the doors of which were freely opened to all, and many, of various ages and characters, resorted to it; some through curiosity, and some from a real and deep interest which they took in the subjects discussed. Still, the lectures were addressed exclusively to the youth, who occupied

\* This was about eight-and-thirty years ago.

seats by themselves, immediately before the speaker: and he did not scruple to use a freedom and tenderness of language; to assume, occasionally, the tone of parental authority; to refer, frequently, to the years, the prospects, the passions, and the temptations, of those who are in the morning of life; to mingle reflections and remarks with his reasoning; to make numerous appeals to the heart and conscience; and to conclude his lectures with more of practical application, than would have been proper, in doctrinal discussions intended for persons of a different description.

The foregoing statement will serve to inform the reader why the lectures in this volume are such as he will find them. They are not compositions originally intended for the press, but discourses prepared to be spoken to a collection of youth, peculiarly dear to the speaker; for whose spiritual instruction and direction he was responsible; and for whose eternal well-being he was deeply solicitous. The whole style and manner of the lectures took their complexion from these circumstances; and the author felt bound to sacrifice every interfering consideration to the edification of his youthful hearers; and to introduce any thing which he thought likely to promote it. He especially endeavoured to give the answers, in the excellent catechism which he expounded, a bearing on the popular and pernicious errors of the time and place in which his lectures were delivered, with a view to guard his juvenile auditory against being misled and corrupted.

As to the publication of these lectures, the author can truly say that he has had much hesitation. When they were delivered, he had evidence enough that they were popular, and in a measure useful. But he doubted whether they were calculated to be either acceptable or beneficial, if committed to the press—

unless they should undergo such alterations as he had neither time nor inclination to make.

He tried the experiment of publishing the first of the series in the *Christian Advocate*, with a distinct intimation, that it implied no pledge that even a second would be added. The lecture published appeared to be well received; and not only has the insertion of the entire series in that miscellany been considered by many as adding value to the work, but the author has been earnestly requested by his friends, in various parts of the country, to publish the whole, as he now does, in a separate volume.

In preparing these lectures for a re-publication, numerous slight corrections, one or two transpositions of parts, and a few retrenchments, have been made; but nothing has been done to change the general *cast* of the composition, or to alter a single feature of the doctrine taught. Indeed, the author has been tempted to flatter himself, from the favourable reception his humble labours have met with, that the manner in which he has treated the subjects discussed is better adapted to popular use, than one more formally systematick, or more purely argumentative. It had been easy to change or omit a few sentences, which refer to circumstances peculiar to the audience addressed. But these sentences serve to sustain the general character of the lectures, and they in no degree interfere with the scope of the discourse. They have, therefore, for the most part, been permitted to stand as they were originally penned and uttered.

The author hopes it will be found, by the attentive reader of this small volume, that the radical principles and distinguishing doctrines of evangelical truth, as exhibited in the Calvinistic system, are as fully set forth, defended, and illustrated, as

could reasonably be expected, in the limits to which he was confined. He is aware, indeed, that short as his lectures are, they contain a measure of repetition; yet he hopes it is not much larger than will be found really useful. It scarcely needs to be remarked, that the same texts of scripture are often pertinent, and even the most pertinent, to prove several different points of doctrine; that the same inferences, or consequences, too, may follow from several premises or positions; and that the same application or appeal may, and frequently ought to be made, from various leading truths of Holy Scripture. Unnecessary repetition ought certainly to be avoided, and when that which is allowable is admitted, the phraseology may often be varied. But to exclude all repetition, would frequently deprive an address of much of its spirit, and the hearer of much that would have been best calculated to further his edification. Sometimes it saves the hearer or reader the time and trouble of making a reference for himself; and sometimes it is really necessary, to place in immediate view the ground of an argument or deduction, that the truth may strike with the greater force.

It has been gratifying to the author to learn, that several teachers of Sabbath schools in the Presbyterian church, have had recourse to his lectures, as they appear in the **Christian Advocate**, to enable them to explain to their pupils, with ease and advantage, the answers to the questions in their **Shorter Catechism**. He regards this as an honour done to his work, and desires to be thankful to God that his labours, from this circumstance, promise to become more extensively useful than he had ventured to anticipate. The present volume will render a recurrence to the needed aid, far easier and more expeditious, than when it was to be searched for in a monthly mis-

cellany. In this connexion, let the author be permitted to say, that while he yields to none in the estimate which he makes of the high value of Sabbath schools, and of the knowledge of the sacred Scriptures imparted to children and youth in these institutions, and in Bible classes, he has ever been of the opinion—and his own practice has uniformly accorded with that opinion—that a thorough acquaintance with the Shorter Catechism should form an indispensable part of the system. It is of more importance than can easily be told, that the doctrines and duties taught in the sacred volume should be digested, and reduced to system in the minds of youth: and for this purpose, nothing can be better adapted than the Shorter Catechism, if it be suitably explained and correctly understood.

It will probably be asked, why the author has published lectures on a part only of the Catechism—why he has not extended them to the whole, and given the entire system at once? The short and plain answer to this inquiry is, that the author has not yet prepared the whole of his lectures on the remaining part of the Catechism—They are in a train of preparation, and some of them have been already published in the Christian Advocate, but the series is not yet completed. In that Miscellany, if life and health be continued, it is proposed to insert the remainder, and then to publish them connectedly in a second volume. All the lectures to which this preface is prefixed were actually delivered, as has been stated, to the youth of the author's pastoral charge.\* None of the others have been, nor probably will ever be, delivered orally; although it is in-

\* The author's call to the presidency of the College of New Jersey, prevented the continuance of his lectures on the Catechism, till he had gone through the whole. Since his return to Philadelphia, he has, at the urgent request of some of those who first heard them, repeated in publick, the most of those which compose the present volume.

tended to continue the same style of address, through the remainder of the course. It is not unusual for authors to publish a part of a work which they have in hand, before the whole is completed; and if, in the present instance, an apology were necessary, it might be found in the circumstance, that this volume contains all the leading *doctrines* of the Catechism. The essential articles of *Faith* and *Repentance* are, indeed, not *formally* discussed; because they occupy a place in the Catechism, more advanced than that at which these lectures terminated. But those important articles have been *really and in substance* considered, in speaking of effectual calling, justification, adoption, and sanctification; since of these it was not practicable to treat properly, without explaining the nature and use of true repentance and saving faith. The present volume therefore may, in a certain sense, be considered as *a whole*, although the author should be disappointed in his hopes of publishing a second.

In concluding this preface, the author will use the freedom to say to his youthful reader,—and to every reader who will receive the intimation without offence—that if he desires to derive practical and lasting benefit from these lectures, they should be read and meditated upon *singly*, with a candid, serious, and special attention to the *remarks and appeals*, with which the most of them are concluded. To read the volume through rapidly, may possibly gratify curiosity, and furnish scope for criticism. But the great concern of the author is, that his lectures may serve a very different and far better purpose. He would therefore respectfully recommend, that if the whole be read cursorily, each one should be afterwards perused by itself; that is, one only at a sitting—for the purpose of reflecting deliberately on the doctrine explained, and

especially of making its application close and personal. This *personal application* is of infinitely more importance than any mere doctrinal knowledge, however accurate. And if the reader will consent to take the course here recommended, and will accompany his other exercises with fervent prayer for the divine blessing, it may be hoped that he will receive a permanent—even an eternal benefit. That this result may be realized in numerous instances, is and shall be, the subject of the author's earnest supplications to that throne of heavenly grace, from which all sanctifying and saving influences must proceed.

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# **LECTURES**

ON THE

## **SHORTER CATECHISM.**

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### **LECTURE I.**

INTRODUCTORY.

**FRIENDS AND BRETHREN,—**

It is with peculiar pleasure that I meet you on this occasion. I meet you to enter on a service intended for the benefit of the young—a service which I have always considered as one of the most important, and which I have certainly found one of the most delightful, among all the duties of the ministerial vocation.

The discussions on which we are entering will be freely open to those of every age, who may choose to attend them. But it will be distinctly kept in mind, that they are specially intended for youth, and will be addressed to them alone. It is my earnest wish that the young may consider themselves as the parties to whom I directly speak—speak with a view to explain, defend and inculcate those great doctrines of our holy religion with which they are supposed to have already some acquaintance, and on a practical regard to which the salvation of their souls depends. There is, moreover, a certain method of treatment and style of address, which are proper when subjects are discussed for the special benefit of the young, which would not be equally proper, if those of more advanced age were included with them in the views of the speaker. These lectures are not to be profound and abstruse theological disquisitions. It is, indeed, an important part of

their design, to enable every attentive hearer to judge of the soundness and scriptural evidence of the doctrines of our Catechism, so as to be able to give a reason for his Christian faith and hope. But the lectures require to be of a *popular* character—in manner affectionate and tender—the manner which should characterize all religious addresses to the young—and directed, throughout, to a practical application of the truth illustrated.

It cannot be unknown to the most of you, my young friends, that objections have been made and strenuously urged, against the propriety of the whole proceeding on which we are now entering. It is proper for my own justification, therefore, to show that these objections are unfounded; and proper to endeavour to remove them from your minds, if they have an existence there; or if they have not, to enable you to answer them satisfactorily, when you meet with them, as you probably will, in reading or conversation. The remainder of this lecture, then, shall be employed in stating and obviating the objections to which I have alluded; in showing the design and usefulness of publick creeds and catechisms; and in giving a very brief account of the origin of our Shorter Catechism, together with a few remarks of a practical import.

There are, I think, *three* objections to such a system of instruction as that which I propose to give, and wish you to receive. The objections, indeed, involve each other, but we will consider them separately.

The *first* is, that the human mind ought not to be preoccupied and biassed, by being taught the principles of any religious creed or system whatsoever, but be left perfectly free and unprejudiced; that it may, at a proper time, impartially judge and adopt for itself, those religious tenets which shall appear most rational, and free from error. It is my wish to state the objection in all its strength, and so stated it may seem specious. But, to my apprehension, it is so far from being solid and conclusive, that I must say, I think no objection was ever more fallacious and unfounded than this. It seems to me that it is made in direct opposition to some of the

plainest laws and indications of our nature. Nothing can be more evident than that it is the appointment of the Creator—with which it is equally useless and impious to contend—that the condition of children, especially in early life, shall be almost identified with that of their parents. The previous condition of parents usually decides whether children shall be born with a sickly, or with a healthful constitution; with, or without, a tendency to hereditary disease; whether the natural disposition shall be benignant or irascible; whether they shall exist in savage or in civilized society; whether they shall be bond or free; whether they shall be rich or poor; whether they shall be instructed or remain in ignorance; whether they shall be brought up in virtue or in vice; whether they shall be Pagans, Christians, Jews, or Mahometans. In all these respects, parents and children are linked together, by the appointment of the Creator; and quarrel with the appointment as we may, we can neither deny it, nor change it. The proper use to be made of the unquestionable fact, I shall hereafter notice. I thus state and dilate upon it a little, because it is, on several accounts, important to be observed and remembered; as well as because it is closely connected with the proper answer to the objection before us. It shows incontrovertibly, that parents must, *in all respects*, have much to do with forming the minds of their children. Man, indeed, as all the moral writers on this subject observe, is evidently intended by his Maker, to owe the development and improvement of all his powers, to instruction and imitation; and not, like the brutes, to instinct. Brutes reach the perfection of their natures, chiefly from instinctive propensities; and hence, many of them would really be far superior to man without instruction—if, indeed, without instruction, man could even reach the age of maturity. And shall the human mind be, at first, almost wholly indebted to parental instruction for information on every other subject, and be left entirely without it on the most important of all subjects—the subject of religion—the knowledge of God and of our duty to him?—knowledge, too, which we originally receive, in

a great measure, from express revelation; and which therefore can never be possessed unless it be communicated? Shall nothing be said to children on this subject? Judge for yourselves, if any thing can be more preposterous. And if you begin to teach, how much will you teach, and where will you stop? Will you not be willing to teach all that you know? Ought you not to do so? Can you often, or easily avoid it—unless you refuse to answer the inquiries which children make?

Consider likewise what would be the effect, in the matter of *prejudice*, of refusing to teach children the principles and duties of religion. Would they, if in this matter left to themselves, really grow up without any prepossessions, in regard to this momentous subject? By no means. They would, on the contrary—and facts prove it—either contract a total indifference or contempt for all religion, or else acquire the most false and pernicious notions—fortified, it is probable, by the strongest prejudices. This is probable, because we are apt to be more attached to opinions which we have elaborated for ourselves, than to those which we have received from others; especially if our minds have been puffed up with the belief that, on a given subject, we are fully competent to be our own teachers, and that to be so is to be spirited and magnanimous.

On the whole, the objection rests on an assumption which is entirely and manifestly false—the assumption that the human mind can best guide itself, in acquiring religious knowledge and principles; and that it will be less prejudiced and more likely to judge correctly, if left without instruction, than if instruction be imparted. The objection we consider is, moreover, diametrically opposed to the inspired precept of the wisest of men—“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” In like manner, it contravenes what St. Paul mentions, with decisive approbation, as the method of Timothy’s education—that “from a child he had known the holy scriptures.” And let not what the apostle immediately adds be forgotten—that these scriptures “are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through

faith which is in Christ Jesus." Blessed be God, we have some unequivocal examples of the most amiable practical piety, in children at a very early age—at an age at which those who advocate this objection would think it too early for children to think of religion at all. And can Christian parents, who know the worth of the soul, see their children live to this age, or know that they may die before they reach it, and yet not give them any just notions of God, and the way of salvation through a Redeemer? The thought is intolerable. It ought not to be endured for a moment.

Doubtless, parents and other teachers should, as far and as fast as children can understand the reason of what they teach, give a reason for all they inculcate—The present course of lectures is delivered with this very design. Doubtless, also, youth ought, with suitable modesty and diffidence, to reason for themselves; and to this, my young friends, I earnestly invite you, in your attendance on all that I deliver. Hear what is said with candour and attention; ask of the Father of lights to guide and counsel you; and acting thus, judge for yourselves—remembering always that, at the tribunal of your final Judge, you must answer for yourselves.

But from what has been said on this objection, it certainly does follow, that parents have a high and awful responsibility, in regard to the religious instruction and education of their children. As children must derive their religious knowledge and opinions from their parents, or if not instructed, imbibe bad and perhaps ruinous sentiments, how careful and how anxious should parents be, that they neither neglect to teach their offspring, nor teach them any thing that is not true and useful. Every Christian parent should keep constantly in mind, that the eternal welfare of his children, as well as their present happiness, may depend on the religious and moral instruction which they receive in their early years—never forgetting, that example teaches even more powerfully than precept; and that without example all precepts will probably be of little avail.

Children and youth should, also, recollect that they have

cause for the liveliest gratitude to the God of providence, for giving them their existence in a Christian country, and granting them the privilege and benefit of a Christian education—an early instruction in the doctrines of divine revelation. This is the use, to which I have alluded, that they ought to make of the fact, that the destinies of children are closely connected with those of their parents. Guard, my young friends, against cavilling at the divine appointment in this respect; guard against perplexing your minds with deep and subtle questions on this subject; for they lead to nothing but doubt, and scepticism, and perhaps to atheism at last. One thing is clear—yours is a happy lot, which calls for gratitude and improvement. Leave to God, who you know can do no wrong, the order of his own government; the disposal of his own creatures, and of all that concerns them. For yourselves, be thankful to him, that you have been born of Christian parents, who have early taught you the knowledge of your Maker and Redeemer. Count it among your richest blessings, that from the very dawn of reason, your minds received information in regard to the things that belong to your everlasting peace; and that your pious parents or friends have been constantly endeavouring, by their counsels, their prayers, and their example, to form you to piety, and to lead you to heaven. While your sympathies are awakened for the heathen and the uninstructed, fail not to recollect that your responsibility is infinitely greater than theirs; and that if you perish, amidst all the light and religious advantages which you enjoy, your perdition will be inconceivably more dreadful than that which you deprecate for them. Towards those who have not had a birth so propitious, and privileges so distinguished as yours, cultivate by all means, the compassion and benevolence which the gospel enjoins. This comprises your duty to them. Join heartily and actively in all plans and endeavours to instruct the ignorant, to reclaim the vicious, and to send the gospel to those who have not yet heard the name of a Saviour.

*The second objection* which I propose to notice is, that in teaching and learning a catechism, and by making the answers

in that catechism the text of lectures, we substitute a human composition for the holy scriptures—nay, that we even set the words of men above the word of God. This objection, like the former, rests, we are confident, entirely on a false assumption. And if those who urge the objection do not know that the assumption is false—as we would fain believe they do not—they must, at least, be chargeable with great ignorance. They could not read even the second answer of the catechism on which I am to lecture, without seeing that a fundamental point which we are to maintain is, that nothing has any authority in religion but the revealed will of God—“That the word of God, contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, is the ONLY RULE to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.” It would be strange indeed, if in the very act of teaching that the scriptures are the ONLY rule of faith and practice, we should set up another and a superior rule, in their place. No, my young friends, it is no doctrine of our church, nor of any member of it ever known to me, that its Confession of Faith and Catechisms are superior to the Bible, or that they make any addition to it, or are any thing without it. On the contrary, not only in the answer I have recited, but in various other places, they teach and inculcate that the scriptures *alone* are to be considered as authoritative, in all that relates to religion, and in all that is binding on conscience. No men that ever lived were more strenuous advocates for these sentiments, than those who formed our religious standards. Hence they took care to have that done, which has not been done by some other Christian communions—I mean, that the scripture proofs should be added, point by point, to every clause of their Confession and Catechisms; that it might be seen that the whole rested, as they believed, on the word of God; and to enable every reader to see and judge for himself, whether the doctrines they laid down were not supported by a clear scriptural warrant. And I take this opportunity to say to you distinctly, that you ought to compare all that you will hear from me, carefully and candidly, with the word of God. I shall endea-

vour to give you plain scriptural proof for the doctrines I teach. But judge of my quotations from the scripture yourselves. If they do not amount to proof, let what I say, as grounded on them, stand for nothing. But if they amount to proof, then remember, that the doctrine is not mine, but that of our common Lord and Master, which none of us can reject but at our peril. It would be perfectly practicable for me to take plain passages of scripture, as texts for all that I propose to say; and then to give the answer in the Catechism, as the expression of the doctrinal truth of those texts, and proceed to discourse upon it accordingly. This is a method which has been, I think, adopted by some, and has been matter of deliberation with myself. But on the whole, it seems to me a method by far the most natural, brief, and easy, to state the doctrine or proposition, in the first place, and then to allege the proofs from scripture, for the several parts of it in detail. This is certainly not a method inconsistent with fair and conclusive reasoning. It is a method precisely similar to this, which is pursued in all mathematical demonstrations. It is also the very method adopted in our courts of justice; where the advocate first states what he expects to prove, then brings forward and examines his evidence, and afterwards reasons to show that the evidence adduced has established his position. In a word, when it is admitted on all hands, as in the case before us, that the doctrine and the scriptural proof must go together, it would seem to be a very cavilling spirit, which makes it matter of offence, or objection, that the proof is not stated before the doctrine, rather than the doctrine before the proof.

The framers of our Catechism unquestionably had texts of scripture directly in view, in every answer they formed; and from a careful consideration of those texts they framed the answer—exactly as a preacher now raises a doctrine from the text which he reads. We only take the reverse order, and first repeat the doctrine, and then support it by the texts. But the truth is, that those who contend with us here rely chiefly on a—

*Third objection*, which is, that no creed or catechism ought to be formed, or taught, or explained, but what consists of the very words of scripture. This it is supposed is strong ground, which those who take believe they can maintain against all opposition. We think otherwise, and are prepared to assign our reasons for believing it right, that every Christian denomination should have a formula of faith, expressed, generally, in different words from those of the sacred text. For this we think it a sufficient reason, that such a formula as we contemplate—such as our Catechism is in fact—is favourable to harmony, order and peace, among those who endeavour to walk together in Christian fellowship; and that it does, in fact, no more than secure—as far as it can be secured—the right which every Christian possesses, to know whether his brother holds what he esteems the fundamental truths of Christianity; and, of course, whether there can be real communion or fellowship between them, or not.

Every sect that bears the Christian name professes to take the scriptures as the rule of faith, and to derive its religious tenets from them. And could a community, I ask, formed out of all these sects, walk together in Christian fellowship and church order? The thing, as I apprehend, is absolutely impossible; because in instances not a few, a part of this community would maintain as essential truths and duties, what another part would strenuously oppose, as the grossest error and the most abominable impiety. A Roman Catholick, for example, would hold communion with none who denied, that the sacramental elements, after consecration, become the real body and blood of Christ; and the Protestant, to say the least, would not choose to commune with any one who maintained this tenet. The Trinitarian would insist on paying divine honours to his Saviour; and the Unitarian would denounce this as idolatry. The orthodox would contend that the atonement of Christ is the only safe reliance of a sinner for acceptance with God; and in this he would be contradicted by those who reject the doctrine of atonement as one of the worst corruptions of Christianity. One party would be zeal-

lous for the baptism of its infant offspring ; and another as zealous in opposing it. One section of this strange community would insist that no ordinances were valid, which were not administered by men tracing their authority in a direct succession from the apostles ; and another would assert that the ascertaining of such a succession was altogether absurd and impossible.

It seems to me, that not one of the parties concerned could be happy or contented, in such a connexion. If any could, it is certain that those could not who hold—as many do hold—that they cannot, and ought not to receive to Christian communion, or recognise as Christians at all, those who reject what they believe to be the fundamentals of religion. To say that this is mere narrowness and bigotry, is to take for granted the whole matter in dispute. The opposite party maintain that they are bound “to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints,” and that they do no more than this, in refusing communion with those who are known to hold radical and ruinous errors. There must be, then, some mutual understanding among the members of a religious communion, as to the manner in which they interpret the language, and receive the doctrines and ordinances of revelation. Accordingly, there is not, so far as my knowledge extends, a religious sect in Christendom, the existing members of which do not, *in some form or other*, take measures to ascertain whether an individual, hitherto a stranger, and now proposing to become one of their number, holds those things which they deem essential to his being a good and profitable member of their community. They satisfy themselves of this, at least before they admit him to *all* the rights, privileges, and influence, of complete membership. This is effected, in some communions, by each individual, before partaking of the Lord’s Supper, giving a statement, either verbally or in writing, of the leading articles of his belief, and his views of a Christian profession ; of which his brethren judge, and receive or reject him accordingly. But this, you perceive at once, is no more than requiring every individual to make a Confession of Faith for

himself. We think it far preferable to have one that has been drawn up, with the greatest deliberation, by men of eminent ability and piety—which every one may examine at his leisure, and before he adopts it, weigh every part of it with the utmost care. As to forcing this creed on those who dislike it, none are more opposed to it than the members of our church; and none do more sincerely rejoice, that we live in a country where no civil pains or penalties can be inflicted for refusing any creed whatsoever. At the same time, we do regard it as utterly unbecoming the spirit of a man and of a Christian, for any individual to disguise his religious opinions, and by so doing to obtain a standing in our church; or to retain a standing and influence already acquired, when he is conscious that he is decidedly hostile to some of the leading articles of our faith and ecclesiastical order. In a word, then, our Catechisms and Confession of Faith are intended to declare the manner in which we understand the scriptures—a declaration which every church has certainly a right to make—which we have seen must be made, and is in fact made, in some way or other, by all religious denominations, with a view to secure unanimity and cordiality. Those who are agreed with us in our understanding of the scriptures, we take into communion, as brothers and sisters; and those who cannot agree with us we leave, with the common privilege of forming a communion for themselves, with those with whom they can harmonize. Is this a bigoted, narrow, or unreasonable system? We think not.

We will now examine, a little more closely, the system of those who admit—not however, it would seem, without some reluctance—that summaries of faith and duty may be framed, provided that in making them, nothing but the very language of scripture be employed. In accordance with this system, summaries of religious truth have been formed, by simply bringing together, from various parts of the sacred volume, a large number of what have been considered apposite texts. Now, although this plan seems to me to require such a regard to *mere language*, as is not required either by reason or re-

velation, yet I would not offer a single objection against it, were it not for the fact already mentioned—a fact too notorious to be denied or disguised—that the constructions given to the language of scripture are so various and opposite, that all the sects of Christendom take shelter under it; so that it can never be known what a man's *real* sentiments are, merely by his quotations of scripture. Are we to believe that the advocates of this system seek to *conceal* their sentiments? Do they hold something which they would rather not openly and fully avow, in the face of the world? It really seems no violation of candour or charity, to believe that something of this kind has an influence, on those who so vehemently denounce and vituperate all human formularies of faith and doctrine. Some, however, we doubt not there are, who conscientiously think that creeds and confessions, expressed in other words than those of scripture, unduly cramp the human mind; and that by confining ourselves to the very language of inspiration we should provide against this evil. But we rather think that the evil which these good men would guard against is imaginary; and that their system, if adopted, would throw us upon one that is undeniably great—the evil of sheltering every kind of heresy, under a professed regard to the language of inspiration.—Not, by any means, that we consider the language of scripture, in regard to the fundamentals of religion, as in itself loose and equivocal. On the contrary, we believe and maintain that no language can be more plain, significant, and impressive. But what with pretended improvements in translating the original, and the glosses and explanations put upon the translation after it is made, we know that the language of scripture has been, and constantly is, most grossly perverted. *We want to tell how we understand it;* and we give the passages of scripture along with our creed, for this very purpose. Does not this embrace the whole that is desirable—a scriptural creed, and the interpretation that we give to scripture? Who can deny that this is frank, and fair, and harmless?—that it is perfectly reasonable, and may be highly useful?

As to cramping the human mind, we have to remark, that we do not believe that great discoveries are yet to be made, in regard to the doctrines of the word of God. That prophecy may hereafter be better understood than it is at present, and that particular passages of scripture may be illustrated by learned criticism, by historical investigations, by geographical, geological, and such like researches and discoveries, we readily admit. But we have no belief that any one leading *doctrine* of Christianity, any one point that we now hold as an important practical truth of the revealed system, will ever be *changed*, by any discoveries yet to be made in the meaning of the sacred writings. We conceive it to be in the highest degree improbable, that any such doctrines and truths as these should have been hidden from the people of God, from the time of the apostles till the present; and that they will continue to be hidden, till the time when these supposed discoveries shall be made. It seems to us, on the contrary, that any pretension that a new and important doctrine had been discovered in the Bible, would be proved false, by its very claim to be *both new and important*. What is important in the doctrines of scripture, has *always* been important to the church of Christ; and we cannot think it reasonable to believe that the whole church has, for nearly two thousand years, been deprived of truth important to her edification; because it was revealed in such a covert manner, that the veil of mystery could not be drawn aside in all that period. Now, our confession and catechisms profess to specify only the *leading* truths and doctrines of revelation: they do not extend to small and less important circumstances and particulars. They therefore relate only to that which we believe to be *unchangeable*—They restrict the human mind no more than it is restricted by divine authority. They thus endeavour to provide for the maintenance of an orthodox scriptural creed; and yet they leave a full and complete opening for all real improvements in biblical learning and theological knowledge.

The great design and principal use of a catechism, or arti-

cles of faith, is to bring together, in proper order, the principal truths and doctrines of the Bible; so that they may be seen at one view, and in a small compass. We believe that this is very advantageous to all, and especially to the young. Hence the practice so general, in our church, of requiring children and youth to commit accurately to memory, at least our Shorter Catechism—frequently, with the whole of the scripture proofs. If it be remarked that much of this catechism cannot be fully understood by children in their early years, it should be remembered, that this is no more than is true of almost all *elementary* instruction. Scarcely ever is it more than partially understood at first; but being treasured up in the memory, it is there for meditation, and investigation, and application, as the mind gradually advances in knowledge and in strength. Parents and teachers, as I have already had occasion to remind you, should explain the catechism to their children, as far as is practicable. To explain it more fully, and to apply it practically, is what I am to attempt in these lectures; which I am sure will be heard with far greater interest, and better comprehension, by those who have learned the catechism, than by those who have not.

It is, without doubt, a wise order, that the sacred volume should be given to us exactly as we have received it, with its doctrines, and precepts, and institutions, connected with history, and biography, and poetry, and proverbs, and prophecy, and epistolary writings. But will any one contend that it is either unlawful or unprofitable, to select from the different parts of the sacred volume, the chief principles and doctrines of divine revelation, to digest them into system, and thus to present them in a connected view? What is a sermon—or at least what ought it to be—but the statement, illustration and enforcement of some revealed truth? And why may not this as lawfully be done in a Catechism, or a Confession of Faith, as in a sermon, or indeed in any other form of discourse or communication? “To the law and to the testimony”—Is not the practice for which I here plead—that of making summa-

ries of religious truth—countenanced by what we find in the Bible itself? What is the decalogue, or moral law, but a summary of religious truth and duty? What is the Lord's Prayer, but a summary of devotion? What did the apostle Paul mean when he expressly commanded Timothy—"Hold fast *the form of sound words* which thou hast heard of me?" And when it is considered how short a time the apostle remained in some of the places in which he established churches, we can, I apprehend, scarcely conceive that, at first, he had time to do more than to give his converts, as missionaries now do, a summary of Christian truth and doctrine. That he could not do less than this, is manifest from the nature of the case—Christian churches could not be established and organized without it. This practice, then, appears, I think, to be warranted by apostolick example and divine authority.

Will it be said, that the summaries to which we have referred were made under the same infallible guidance of inspiration, by which the scriptures themselves were indited? Such certainly was the fact; and by referring to the summaries of inspiration, we only claim to have established the point, that such compilations are, in themselves, lawful and useful.

The catechetical or questionary form of religious summaries, renders them most easy and interesting, to children and youth; and indeed to Christians of all ages and descriptions. For myself, I have no reluctance to state thus publickly, what I have frequently mentioned in private, that in the composition of sermons, one of the readiest and best aids I have ever found, has been my catechism. Let me add further, that long observation has satisfied me, that a principal reason why instruction and exhortation from the pulpit are so little efficacious, is, that they presuppose a degree of information, or an acquaintance with the truths and doctrines of divine revelation, which, by a great part of the hearers, is not possessed; and which would best of all have been supplied by catechetical instruction. It is exactly this kind of instruction, which is, at the present time, most urgently needed, in many, perhaps in most, of our congregations. It is needed to imbue effectu-

ally the minds of our people with "the first principles of the oracles of God;" to indoctrinate them soundly and systematically in revealed truth; and thus to guard them against being "carried about with every wind of doctrine;" as well as to qualify them to join in the weekly service of the sanctuary with full understanding, and with minds in all respects prepared for the right and deep impression of what they hear.

Catechisms and creeds of human composition, have, in fact, always existed in the church of God—The Jews have them till this day. What is usually called the apostles' creed, though probably not composed by the apostles themselves, was apparently formed in the apostolick age. That creeds of human composition may be abused, and have been abused, we do not deny. But so has the inspired volume itself, and that in the most palpable and lamentable manner. To argue against the usefulness of any thing, because it *may* be abused, is weak and inconclusive. The argument proves too much.—It goes to destroy every thing excellent. In the primitive Christian church, there was an order of men called catechists, whose business it was to instruct in the first principles of religion, a description of persons called catechumens, who by this instruction, were prepared for baptism and full communion with the church. We have no such order of men at present in our church, but the duties which they performed ought to be discharged faithfully by parents and pastors; for without this kind of instruction, I repeat, the best preparation will seldom, if ever, be made, for advancing rapidly and correctly in Christian knowledge and Christian edification.

Creeds and catechisms moreover are of use to make known to the world at large, what are the *real* religious tenets of the several Christian denominations that adopt them. It is frequently made the subject of complaint, by different sects of Christians, that their religious faith and principles are misrepresented. This complaint, certainly, may be made with great justice, by every sect that has given to the world a full and fair exhibition of its faith and practice. But surely those who have not done this, have little reason to com-

plain. At least, they ought not to complain of any misconceptions, or misrepresentations, which do not appear to have been wilful and malignant. It does seem to me that every religious denomination owes to itself, and to the world at large, a fair exhibition of the fundamentals of its faith. To itself it owes such an exhibition, that unfounded prejudices may not be conceived to its disadvantage—and for the same reason, as well as that those who do not belong to it may be informed, and perhaps edified, the debt is due to the world at large. The justice of this opinion has, in fact, been almost universally felt, if not distinctly admitted.\* There are very few sects in Christendom, that have not publick and acknowledged formularies of their faith: and those who have not, almost always refer, when inquiries about their principles are made, to some writings, or to some author, generally acknowledged to have made a just representation of their religious belief and practice.

You have now heard my reply to all the objections, of any moment, which I have ever heard, against religious creeds and catechisms, and my reasons for thinking that these formularies and summaries are not only lawful, but exceedingly useful and important. If what I have said on this subject has been satisfactory, you will be prepared to hear the intended course of lectures without prejudice, and consequently with a greater prospect of advantage.

The catechism on which the subsequent lectures are to be founded, is the production of some of the most learned and pious divines that ever lived. Its origin was this—In the year A. D. 1643, an Assembly of one hundred and twenty-one divines, with thirty lay assessors, was convened, by an order of the British parliament, in Westminster. They were soon joined by commissioners from Scotland. They sat more than five years and a half. They hoped to have formed a rule of faith, and form of church government, for both nations. What they did was ultimately rejected by the Eng-

\* See “Corpus et Syntagma confessionum fidei,” &c.

lish, and adopted by the Scotch. The Presbyterian church in this country, derives its origin from that of Scotland, and has taken its Confession of Faith, with some important alterations relative to magistrates and civil government, and its catechisms, with only one slight alteration,\* from the Scottish model. The present standards of our church were adopted by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, sitting in this city, in May, 1788.

You will understand, my young friends, that I am no advocate for national churches, or ecclesiastical establishments of any kind; nor is any thing of this sort, in the slightest degree, countenanced, but on the contrary, it is expressly disclaimed, in our church standards, and cordially disapproved, I know, by the clergy, as well as the laity of our church. In this we certainly differ from the Westminster Assembly of divines. What we esteem their error, in regard to national religious establishments, was, however, rather the error of the day in which they lived, than any thing peculiar to the men who composed that assembly. There is not one word touching this point, and there never was, in the Shorter Catechism which they formed. This is a composition, which has been held, by as competent judges, probably, as the world has seen since the apostolick age, to be among the soundest and best expressed compendiums of Christian faith and practice, that were ever formed by uninspired men. Such, then, is the catechism, and such the short history of it, to which your serious attention is to be drawn, in the subsequent lectures.

In the conclusion of this introductory address, allow me to say, that I indulge the hope, that your attendance here will be regular, punctual and serious. Occasional absences it may not be practicable to avoid. But may it not be expected that

\* The single alteration, or omission rather, was in the larger catechism; where, in stating what is forbidden in the second commandment, the original framers of the catechism, among many things which they specify, mention this—"tolerating a false religion." This clause, the writer, who was a member of the Synod that adopted our standards, remembers was rejected very promptly—he thinks without debate, and by a unanimous vote.

slight hindrances, or fashionable amusements, will not be permitted to draw you aside from a course of religious instruction, which will occupy but one evening in the week, and which it will be highly advantageous for you to receive in an unbroken series.

One thing more, and I shall have done. Let me beseech you all, not to content yourselves merely with *intellectual* improvement—important and commendable as such improvement certainly is. I have known some young persons, who were desirous to increase their *knowledge*, and to render it accurate, on the subject of religion; and who, notwithstanding, guarded themselves very cautiously, against the influence of this knowledge on their *hearts and lives*—They wished to understand religion, but not to practise it. Take, I entreat you, a different course. Endeavour to open your hearts, as well as your understandings, to the sacred truths which you are to hear explained and inculcated. Do I ask too much, when I request you always to pray for a divine blessing, on what you are going to hear, and after you shall have heard it? If you will do this, the happiest result may certainly be expected. And if, in answer to your prayers, and the prayers of many, which will, I know, be offered for you, your attention to these lectures shall be the means of leading you to genuine Christian piety, we shall have reason to rejoice—and I hope shall actually rejoice together—through every subsequent period of our existence—I, that I was permitted to be the instrument of so much good; and you, that God was pleased to bless my feeble endeavours, to your eternal benefit.

## LECTURE II.

*What is the chief end of Man?*

HAVING in a former lecture shown that the objections are unfounded, which are raised against Formulas of faith, and a proper exposition of them, I now proceed immediately to consider the first\* answer in our Shorter Catechism, which is this—

“ Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”

It is with great propriety that this is made the first subject of attention in a system of theological truth. Even in natural religion, this is considered as the point at which all inquiry and discussion must begin. “ It seems a point agreed upon —says a writer on natural religion—that the principles of duty and obligation must be drawn from the nature of man: that is to say, if we can discover how his Maker formed him, or for what he intended him, that certainly is what he ought to be.”†

Difficulties, however, of the most serious kind, leading to perplexed and endless disputes, embarrassed the ancient heathen philosophers, and must embarrass all philosophers, whether ancient or modern, in attempting, without the aid of revelation, to explain the nature and chief end of man. We have great reason, therefore, to be thankful, that in investigating

\* It is proper to remark, that the questions in the Shorter Catechism are not necessary to a full understanding of the answers, which may be read without the questions; and when thus read, will be found to contain, each a perspicuous proposition, and the whole, taken in connexion, to form a complete and beautiful system. In these lectures therefore, a question will be placed at the beginning of each lecture, merely to indicate the subject of that lecture, and the discussion of the answer will immediately commence.

† Witherspoon’s Moral Philosophy.

this interesting subject, we have clearer light than human reason alone can furnish—That we know, from the declaration of God himself, how, and for what, he formed man at first, and to what end all his conduct ought still to be directed.

As the answer before us speaks of the *chief* end of man, this, you perceive, implies that there may be other *inferior*, *subordinate*, and *subservient* ends,\* which, in consistency with the appointment of the Deity, we may and should regard. A careful attention to this is important, both on its own account, and for a right apprehension of the general subject.

It was clearly intended by the Creator that man should preserve his own life; that he should continue his species; that he should improve his faculties; that he should provide for his own comfortable subsistence in the world; and that he should sustain many relations and discharge many duties, which grow, as it were, out of his very nature as an intelligent, moral, and social being. All these, therefore, are ends or objects, at which man not only may, but ought to aim. By neglecting or refusing to do so, he would violate the law of his nature—the appointment of his God.

But it is to be carefully observed and remembered, that all these objects are to be regarded and pursued, as ends *subordinate* and *subservient*, to one which is unspeakably higher and more important, and which therefore is called the *chief end*. All other ends or pursuits are to be considered and treated only as *means*, or steps of advance, to help and carry us forward to this *chief end*, which is, *the glorifying and enjoying of our God*. Whoever, therefore, makes it his chief end—an end beyond which he does not look—an object which he makes supreme and ultimate—to obtain wealth, or honour, or influence, or ease, or worldly good of any kind—that individual contravenes the order of his Maker, violates his

\* A distinction has sometimes been stated between an *ultimate* and a *chief* end. Such a distinction may sometimes perhaps be made with justice; but it cannot be so made in the subject here discussed. Man's *chief* and *ultimate* end are here the same.

appointment, makes an ultimate end of what, if not absolutely unlawful in itself, should be regarded only as the *means* of serving, glorifying, and enjoying his Creator.

And in this very point it is, my young friends, that the sin and the folly of the great mass of mankind may be seen. They make a *chief end* of what should be only a *subordinate* one: they try to find substantial happiness where it never was, and never can be found; they give to creature objects that high regard and supreme affection, which belong only to the Creator. Hence they are chargeable with spiritual idolatry; and therefore of such it is said in Holy Scripture, that they “worship and serve the creature, more than the Creator, who is blessed forever.”

The *reasonableness* of making it our chief end to glorify and enjoy God, is almost too obvious for argument. To Him we are indebted for our existence; he gave us all our powers and all our capacities of enjoyment; he constantly upholds our being, and crowns our lives with loving kindness and tender mercy; he is, in Himself, the undervived fountain of all conceivable perfection and excellence; he has given his Son to be our Saviour, and his Spirit to be our Sanctifier, Guide, and Comforter; he is able—and he *alone* is able—to render us completely happy, by imparting to our souls an enjoyment which can entirely fill and satisfy them. The reasonableness of making it our chief end to glorify and enjoy *such* a Being as this, must be evident at once. Men may, and alas! they too generally do, forget and neglect their duty in this respect; but its *reasonableness* they do not often deny—It cannot be denied without the most glaring absurdity, and the most daring impiety. I shall, therefore, only add at present, to what you have heard on this point, the express command by which the duty is enjoined in scripture:—“ Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

If, then, it be clearly the chief end of man to glorify and enjoy God, the important inquiry returns,—how is this to be done? My dear youth, the glory of God and our own happiness are always promoted by the same means, as I shall

show in its place. They ought, however, to be viewed separately. And to unfold the subject, in as clear and practical a manner as I am able, let me first explain what is to be understood by man's *glorifying* God.

Here an old and just distinction is to be observed—the distinction between the *essential* and the *declarative* glory of God.

Let it be observed, that the glory of any being, or object, is something which renders such being or object worthy of very high admiration, esteem, and love. Whoever, or whatever, is thus worthy, we denominate glorious. Now God is, from his very nature and attributes, worthy, in the highest possible degree, of esteem, love, and admiration. Of these affections, in their most vigorous exercise, there is every thing in the Deity to render him the fit object.

It has been observed, that we form our ideas of the Supreme Being by adding *infinity* and *perfection* to whatever we can conceive of excellence, both natural and moral. Now, this infinitude and perfection of natural and moral excellence, constitutes the essential glory of God; and this, you will observe, can never be increased or diminished. It cannot be increased, because, by the supposition, it is already infinite and perfect. It cannot be diminished, because it is among the perfections of the Deity, that he is immutable and independent. If it should be supposed that not a creature in the universe was able to perceive, or was disposed to acknowledge, the glorious perfections of the blessed God, that plainly would not change their nature; or make them, in themselves, less worthy of the affections which they are proper to excite—They would remain exactly what they are; and what they were, in fact, eternal ages before any creature did exist. When, therefore, we are commanded to glorify God, the command has no relation to this his *essential* glory; because this is wholly unconnected, as we have seen, with the dispositions or actions of any of his creatures.—He is entirely independent on all creatures, in his essential glory and perfect happiness.

The command then relates altogether to the *declarative*

glory of God. It has pleased the blessed God to make a *declaration*, manifestation, or display, of his glorious nature and attributes, in order that they may be perceived, admired, esteemed and loved, by his intelligent and moral creatures, whom he created for this very purpose. This declaration of the glorious nature and attributes of the Deity, is made even by the inanimate creation. “The heavens *declare* the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” In every part of creation, the boundless wisdom, power and goodness of the Deity are conspicuously manifested. But it is in the volume of inspiration, given by Himself, that we have the clearest revelation, or declaration, of the nature and perfections of God. It is here alone, that we are taught to form conceptions which are entirely *just—adequate* they can never be—of his purity, holiness, and justice: and in no other way whatever, than by his own declaration, could we be *assured* of his mercy, or his readiness to pardon the guilty.

Now, this declarative glory of God, is not, you perceive, unconnected with his creatures. A declaration, indeed, necessarily implies a party to whom the declaration is made. Intelligent and moral beings are necessary, in order that this declarative glory of God may be perceived. It is to them, and for their sakes, that it is made. They were, as already intimated, created for the very purpose of perceiving, diffusing, and being made happy by it. And they are said to glorify God, when they duly admire, esteem and love him, for whatever of his nature and attributes can be discerned, in his works and in his word. When, on the contrary, they refuse or fail to do this, they are said not to glorify, but to dis honour him. And when they are instrumental in bringing their fellow creatures to the knowledge, esteem, love, and obedience of God, they are then said to *promote* his glory;

they, as it were, widen and enlarge the circle in which his declarative glory shines, and produces its proper effects.

This may serve for a general illustration of the point before us. I shall show, more particularly, how we are both to glorify and enjoy God, after disposing of some other inquiries and considerations which belong to the subject; and which, if rightly disposed of, will serve both to illustrate and enforce the duty of glorifying God, and of seeking happiness in Him, as the chief end of our being.

One of the inquiries to which I have referred, may be stated thus—if it be the chief end of man to glorify and enjoy God, will it not follow, that this must always be present to his mind, as the immediate and operative motive, in every voluntary action of his whole life? This inquiry I apprehend involves no real difficulty. We have already seen that a chief end, not only consists with intermediate and subordinate ends, but implies them. Having rightly fixed our chief end, and duly arranged whatever leads to it, every intermediate concern may occupy our attention, and be the proximate motive of action, so as not to interfere with what is ultimate, but constantly to carry us forward toward it, in all respects as much as if the ultimate object were every moment present to the mind—Take a familiar illustration of this. Say that a man enters on a long journey, with a view to transact some very interesting and important concern. This important concern is his *chief end*. For this he takes the journey; with a view to this he makes every preparation; ascertains the best and most direct route; the best, and safest, and most speedy conveyance; and provides for the preservation of his health, comfort and accommodation on the way—While on the way, he enjoys company; improves his mind by observation and reading; refreshes himself by food and sleep; and attends to numerous subordinate concerns, not inconsistent with a regular and rapid advance toward his main and ultimate object. But in the mean time, this object, you observe, is not every moment present to the mind of the traveller, as the immediate ope-

rative motive of all that he does. Yet he is really influenced by it in all that he does; and in all that he does he advances as rapidly toward it, as if it incessantly engrossed all his thoughts and all his conversation. It may be added also, that he is so influenced by it, that he is careful to keep the direct road toward it; and would immediately take the alarm, if a proposition were offered, or an attempt were made, to turn him aside from the right way, or to delay him unnecessarily in his journey.

The application of all this might be left to every hearer. Human life is a journey. It is represented in scripture as a pilgrimage. The great errand of this pilgrimage—the errand on which we are sent into the world is—to glorify and enjoy God. This is our *chief end*. This is to influence us in all our arrangements, and in all our progress through life. Yet we have a thousand subordinate cares and concerns, that must occupy our attention, and employ much of our time. But they may and ought to be so disposed and ordered as not to hinder, but constantly to carry us forward, in the pursuit of our great ultimate object. And to this we should have such a constant and supreme regard, as to perceive in a moment when any thing would turn us aside, or delay us in our advances toward it.

Before leaving this topic however, I must remind you distinctly, that the real danger to be avoided, is, not that we shall think *too much*, but that we shall think *too little*, of glorifying and enjoying God. What you have heard has been said to show that the Divine command is *not impracticable*.—It interferes with no duty. But in reality the great danger is, *forgetfulness* of God; and the great difficulty and complaint of the best of men is, that they do not think as much as they ought to do of their chief end. That man, my young friends, is the most a Christian, who most seeks and finds his happiness in glorifying and enjoying God: who keeps it most in mind, that he is not of the world, even as Christ, his Master, was not of the world:—that his citizenship is in heaven; that he is a pilgrim and a stranger on the

earth; that he is seeking a better country, even a heavenly; that he is travelling to Mount Zion above.

We now proceed to another inquiry. The answer in the Catechism on which I am speaking, mentions *two* things, which are certainly in some respects different, namely, the glorifying of God, and the everlasting enjoyment of him. What was the intention of this? Can our chief end consist in two distinct things? I have already had occasion to remark, that the glory of God and our own happiness are always promoted by the same means, and yet that they imply distinct views. To remind us of this connexion and distinction, was, I suppose, the design of those who formed the answer we consider; and it is not unimportant to keep it constantly in mind.

1st, Then, let us briefly consider that a supreme regard to the glory of God, never does or can interfere with the truest regard to our own happiness. It would indeed be strange, if it were otherwise. One of the clearest and strongest laws of the nature which our Maker has given us is, that we should desire and seek our own happiness; and it would imply a contradiction of Himself, if he had given us a second law, which we could not keep without violating the first. Let us never entertain such unworthy thoughts of our Maker, as to imagine this. No truly, we must believe that the glory of God, and our own highest *final* happiness, are always consistent and inseparable. Yet some of those who have resolved all virtue into disinterested benevolence, and all real piety into disinterested love of God, have certainly gone the length of affirming, that a man ought to be willing to suffer eternal perdition, for the promotion of the divine glory. Now in answering to this, we are ready to acknowledge that there is, not only a *disinterested* love of God, but that without it there can be no true love to God at all. He who does not love the Deity for what he is, in and of Himself, certainly has no genuine love to Him. Yet this by no means implies, either that *all* true virtue is comprised in this single act or affection, or that a love of *gratitude*, always implying a sense

of favours received, is unlawful; or that a regard to our own happiness is not permitted, or not absolutely incumbent on us. The whole error, it seems to me, arises from attempting to separate in imagination, and in reasoning, what are never separated in fact; but indissolubly linked together by the divine constitution. Thus, in regard to the point before us, those who maintain it must, I apprehend, make a separation between the *suffering* and the *sin*, of a state of final perdition. That state will, *in fact*, invariably consist not only of extreme misery, but of the most awful and unmixed enmity to God, and to all goodness. Now, if the misery of such a state be not in idea separated from its sinfulness, then those who affirm that a man must be willing to be consigned to eternal perdition for the glory of God, will have to maintain, that we may and ought to love our Maker with such supreme affection as to be willing to hate and blaspheme Him forever. But any thing more palpably absurd and self-contradictory than this, cannot, in my apprehension, be easily expressed or conceived: and to my mind it is not less shocking than it is absurd.

As to those passages of scripture—I think they are but two—which are supposed to give some direct countenance to this objectionable tenet, I have only time to say at present, that I entirely agree with the best commentators, in thinking that they have not the smallest bearing on the point.\* No, my young friends, the appointment of the God of all goodness is, that in glorifying Him we shall, always and invariably, consult our own highest happiness; we shall enjoy his comfortable presence now, and be preparing to enjoy it to all eternity.

But 2d, Although, by the divine constitution, the glory of God and the happiness of the man who glorifies Him, are inseparable, these two things not only admit of distinct views, but sometimes require them. I have just shown indeed that they may be so widely separated, as to leave one entirely out of sight, which certainly ought never to be done. Yet in

\* See the note at the end of the Lecture.

laying down a rule of duty, good reasons may be assigned, why we should always make the glory of God our guide, and derive from it our highest motive, and our supreme obligation; mindful always, that by doing so, we shall invariably consult our own best interest.

*In the first place,* We should recollect that it is agreeable to the fitness of things—to what we always consider right and reasonable—that we should be supremely influenced by the consideration of that which is in itself most important. Now, the glory of the great and ever blessed God, is, in itself, the most important consideration that can be presented to the mind of any of his intelligent creatures. There is no comparison between the importance of promoting the glory of God, and any other end or object that we can have in view. While therefore other objects may be thought of, and other motives have influence, this, in all reason, should be supreme; and should immediately control every other which may come, or seem to come, in competition with it.

*In the second place,* A regard to the glory of God is a much clearer, safer, and more simple rule of duty, than merely aiming to promote our own happiness. There is nothing perhaps, in which men so often, and so fatally mistake, as in choosing a course of action which they think will render them happy. What such a course actually is, has been the subject of the gravest disputes. Among the heathen philosophers, the great inquiry was about the *summum bonum*; or what course of life would render man the happiest: and in our daily observation we see men in pursuit of happiness, completely missing their aim, and incurring misery instead of providing for their eventual felicity. But we have a much clearer and more simple rule, when we take as our guide the moral law, given us by God himself—and an obedience to which is, in the very act of obeying, to glorify him. This therefore, we ought, in all cases, invariably to follow; and trust it with God to make—as he certainly will make—our obedience to result, or terminate, in our greatest good—our highest happiness.

*In the third place,* God has commanded us, to make a direct regard to his glory the rule of duty and action. This command you have heard recited; and you have just seen that it is founded both in reason and utility. But we should remember, that although this were not thus obvious, a plain precept of our Maker carries in its very nature, not only the highest authority, but the highest reason too: for of nothing can we be better assured, than that whatever is required by Him who is the infinite fountain of all wisdom and all goodness, is perfectly reasonable and perfectly benevolent: therefore in all cases “obey and let heaven answer for the rest.”

It now only remains to state, very briefly and summarily, in what manner we are to act, if we would make the glorifying and enjoying of God the chief end of our being.

1. We cannot glorify God, unless we form just conceptions of Him. A great part of the world, even where the light of revelation has shined, we have reason to fear, deceive themselves, in thinking that they love and honour God, when in reality they do not. They have formed erroneous conceptions of the Supreme Being; and what they love is, in fact, only a creature of their own deluded minds. I am hereafter to speak of the attributes of God; and shall therefore not anticipate that subject. I shall only now say, that if we would glorify God, we must be careful to conceive of Him as we are taught to do in his own holy word—conceive of Him “in his whole round of attributes complete;” as holy and just, as well as great, and good, and merciful.

2. As already stated, we must be filled with admiration, esteem and love, in our contemplations of Him. God is, as you have heard, infinitely worthy of these affections and exercises of our minds. We can never exceed in them, while they do not overwhelm our faculties. And without feeling them in some measure, we can never glorify Him at all.

3. God is to be glorified by obeying his laws, and keeping all his commandments. Without this indeed, all our professions of honouring, or delighting in Him, will be but vile hypocrisy, or wretched delusion. “If ye love me keep my

commandments”—was the injunction of the Saviour; and it is the test by which all our avowed regard to the honour and glory of God must be tried.

4. And especially—If we would glorify God, we must be reconciled to him through Jesus Christ his Son, our Saviour. We must accept of Christ as he is offered in the gospel; rely on him alone for *our* acceptance with God; know the power of the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, in forming us into the likeness of Christ; and always approach the Father of mercies, through the mediation of the Redeemer, by the aids and influence of the blessed Spirit. It is in the work of redemption by Christ, that it is the purpose of God to glorify Himself, more than in all his other works: and it is utterly vain to think of glorifying Him, if we do not humbly and thankfully receive Christ for all the purposes for which he was given; and do not see and admire the glory of God, as it shines transcendently in the great work of our redemption.

But we are to *enjoy* God, as well as to glorify him—

1. By choosing him as the portion of our souls, and seeking and finding our highest happiness in Him. “Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee”—was the language of holy Asaph—and every holy soul that has ever lived, has known, that in communion with God, in a consciousness of his love and favour, and in the expectation of enjoying his blissful presence forever, there is a *present* enjoyment, unspeakably greater than all the delights of sense, or than all that the pleasures of mere intellect can ever afford.

2. God is enjoyed, as well as honoured, by trusting him. It is equally the privilege, the duty, and the comfort, of every child of God, to trust Him without reserve, and with unshaken confidence. “We know that all things work together for good, to them that love God.” But only those who have experienced it, can know what a consolation and satisfaction there is, in an assured belief that every present and every future event, will be ordered by an almighty, and an infinitely wise and good Being—and ordered for the greatest good of

the soul, that has a covenant interest in his friendship and faithfulness. But,

3. God is to be enjoyed perfectly and eternally, by all who make the glorifying and enjoying of Him their chief end. This is expressly stated, in the answer we consider, as that at which we ought constantly to aim. The present is but the bud of being—the smallest part, the incipient stage of our existence. Time, in comparison with eternity, is as nothing. We ought, therefore, to renounce every temporal gratification and pleasure that is inconsistent with preparation for a happy eternity; and to disregard all pain, and privation, and suffering, which we may be called to endure, in making such preparation—in performing duty, or in showing resignation to the will of God. Heaven is, indeed, in all cases begun on earth. The temper that qualifies for heaven must be implanted here; and a foretaste of its joys is, in some measure, known by every Christian believer. But in his present state, all is imperfect, broken, and of short duration. Soon however, he will escape from this state of trial, pass beyond the reach of all his enemies, rise an immaculate spirit to the presence of his Saviour—the bosom of his God—and there he will enjoy an interminable existence, in the full fruition of his Creator's love, and an unceasing showing forth of his glory.

Two short reflections, on what you have heard, will close the present discussion.

1. If man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever, what a view does this give us of the actual state of the world, and the general pursuits of mankind? Alas! how few of them—how few, even among those who live under the light of the gospel—are aiming at the glory of God and the enjoyment of Him, as the great concern of life, the governing motive of all they do? Are not a very large majority aiming at every thing else, rather than at this? Do they often even think of this? Are they not eagerly pursuing every worldly object, every temporal concern—often the merest toys and trifles, to the total neglect and disregard of this great

end of their being; which yet they must be brought to regard, or be lost forever. Is it to be wondered at, that those who know the worth of the soul are so much in earnest—nay, is it not wonderful that they are not much more in earnest—to bring this deluded throng to consideration, and to “turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;” that they escape the awful and impending danger to which they are exposed. But,

2. Bring this subject, my dear youth, home to yourselves. Who of you have—and who of you have not—made it *your* chief end, to glorify God and to enjoy him forever? Those of you who have not—whose consciences tell you that you have not—ought to be reminded—and let me, in faithfulness and tenderness, tell you plainly, that hitherto you have lived worse than in vain. The chief end of your existence—the very purpose for which you were sent into the world—you have entirely neglected and disregarded. Such neglect and disregard, even on the supposition that you have been chargeable with no flagrant vice, nay on the supposition that you have exhibited an amiable example before the world—such neglect and disregard of God and of the best interests of your immortal souls, renders you unspeakably guilty in his sight. It places you in the fearful situation of living, while thus you remain, under his constant displeasure; and in danger of being cut off in your sins and rendered miserable forever. Be intreated therefore to consider your situation; to think of the reasonableness of devoting yourselves to God—of your sacred obligations to do so; and of the safety and happiness of the state in which you will be found, if you make it your chief end to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. Implore the aids of divine grace, to enable you humbly and firmly to form, and to carry into effect, the resolution, that henceforth you will endeavour to act as becomes your rational, moral, and immortal nature—that you will regard and live for eternity more than for time.

But I rejoice in having reason to believe that some of you have already devoted yourselves, unfeignedly and unreserved-

ly, to the glory and service of God. Thrice happy youth! you can never be thankful enough for that rich grace which has inclined you, in the morning of life, to make this dedication. Be not high minded but fear. Study to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things. Endeavour to keep your chief end constantly in view, through the whole of your subsequent life—assured that the more fully you do this—the more steadily and unreservedly you seek to glorify God—the more true happiness you will enjoy; the more useful you will be in the world, and the more exalted will be that state of endless felicity on which you will enter, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life. Amen.

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NOTE.—The author is willing to place in a note, what he could not conveniently introduce into the lecture. In Exodus xxxii. 31—33, we thus read—“And Moses returned unto the **LORD**, and said, oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin: and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the **LORD** said unto Moses, whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.” Scott’s admirable commentary on this passage is in the following words:

“The meaning of this vehement language has been much disputed: and some contend, that he expressed his willingness to be blotted out of the book of life, and so finally to perish, provided this might be accepted as an atonement for the sin of his people; and they put the same construction on the words used by St. Paul, on something of a similar occasion. But this interpretation seems inadmissible: for the spiritual law of God only requires us to ‘love our neighbours *as ourselves*;’ not more than ourselves, which surely is implied, in being willing to be for ever miserable, either for their temporal or eternal salvation. Even Christ, of whom Moses is supposed to have been a type in this proffer, was only willing for our salvation to die a temporal death, with every possible circumstance of inward and outward suffering; not to be eternally miserable: and the apostle says, ‘We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren;’ not that we ought to devote our souls to destruction for them.—No doubt zeal for the honour of God glowed in the heart of Moses, when he thus expressed himself; and perhaps he could not conceive, how that could be secured and manifested, either by destroying or sparing his people. But it should be remembered, that not only final misery, but final desperate

enmity to God, is implied in the proposal, if thus understood; and it is wonderful that any man should think, a willingness to be eternally wicked and a desperate hater of God, can spring from love to him, and be a proper expression of zeal for his glory!—If, therefore, Moses referred to this proposal, when he said, ‘Peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin;’ the words may be thus paraphrased; ‘O Lord, instead of destroying Israel as a sacrifice to thy justice, and making of me a great nation, let me be the sacrifice, and spare them: and if it may not consist with thy glory to spare them otherwise, and my death may suffice for that purpose, exclude me from Canaan, and take me out of life, in any way thou seest good, that my people may be preserved and thy name glorified.’—But perhaps he only meant to say, ‘If my people must be destroyed, cut me off also, and let me not survive or witness their destruction.’—The expression, ‘blot me out of thy book,’ is an allusion to the affairs of men, which is used in various senses in the scriptures, as may be seen by the marginal references.—Whatever Moses meant by the request, the Lord did not accede to it, at least on that occasion; but only answered, that he would ‘blot those who had sinned out of his book;’ that is, he would punish the guilty, not the innocent; yet, when Moses afterwards offended God, and was excluded from Canaan while his people inherited it, this request may seem to have been remembered against him.

“The Lord, in commanding Moses to lead the people to Canaan, and in promising that his angel should go before him, intimated that he would not immediately pour out his vengeance upon them to destroy them: but at the same time he declared, that this national violation of the covenant should be remembered against them, when their other crimes should induce him to visit them in anger. The Jews have to this day a saying current among them to this effect, ‘That all the calamities which have ever since befallen the nation, have in them a measure of the Lord’s indignation for the sin of the golden calf.’—We are not informed in what manner He *plagued* the people at this time; but they felt sensibly the effects of his displeasure in some way or other: and it is particularly to be noticed, that however Aaron endeavoured to exculpate himself, and many things have since been urged in his excuse, yet God expressly mentioned him, as a *principal* agent in this heinous transgression of Israel.”

It will be perceived that the sentiments of the author are in full accordance with those of this able divine and commentator; and that Dr. Scott has also taken occasion to speak of the other text to which reference has been made, and to give his judgment that it affords no countenance to the opinion controverted. But in regard to this latter text, the author has long been of the opinion, that it only needs to be fairly translated from the original, to show that it has no relation whatever to the subject in dispute. The text is found Rom. ix. 3, and stands in the original thus—*Ηὐχόμενος γαρ αὐτος ἐγώ αναθερα*

*εἰναι απὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ σκέψας τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου, τῶν συγγενῶν μου κατὰ σάρκα.*

The first part of this verse, in which the whole difficulty lies, our translators render—"For I could wish myself accursed from Christ"—Is this a just translation? Let those decide who have any tolerable acquaintance with the Greek language. (1) *Ηὐχόμην*, is not in the subjunctive or potential mood—I *could* wish; but in the imperfect tense of the indicative—I *wished* or *did wish*. If the word *ηὐχόμην* had been accompanied with the potential conjunction *αν*, it might have the force or meaning of the potential mood. Of such a rendering of verbs in the indicative, when accompanied with this conjunction, our translation of the New Testament exhibits a number of unexceptionable examples. But in the text under consideration, this conjunction is not found; and therefore, unless the manifest sense of the passage had indispensably demanded it, *ηὐχόμην* ought not to have been translated, I *could* wish; but, agreeably to its proper import, I *wished* or *did wish*—referring not to the *present*, but to a *former* state of the apostle's mind. This correct translation of *ηὐχόμεν* is given by Arias Montanus, "*obtabam enim ipse ego;*" and by our countryman, Charles Thomson—"for I, even I myself, *wished*." (2) It happens that this verb, in the very mood and tense, in which it is found in the text we are considering, is read in one other place in the New Testament, Acts xxvii. 29—*ηὐχόντος ημέραν γενεσθαι*—rightly rendered by our translators, *they wished for the day*. But why should *ηὐχόντος* be rendered *they wished* in this text, and *ηὐχόμην*, *I could wish*, in Rom. ix. 3? It is believed that no satisfactory reason can be assigned for this variation: and this belief is strengthened, by considering how the sense of the former passage would have been sunk and almost destroyed, if it had been translated like the latter—It would surely have been a very flat expression, to have said of a ship's crew in a dark and tempestuous night, and every moment in danger of destruction, that "*they could have wished for the day.*" Yet this would have been the very same kind of translation as that of the text we consider. (3) In another respect, as well as in

the rendering of the word *ηὐχομην*, the common translation seems not to correspond with the grammatical structure of the original; and it certainly departs from the government which the verb *εὐχομαι* is seen to have in the exactly similar sentence which has just been quoted. In that sentence this Greek verb, signifying *to wish*, governs the noun which is the *subject* of the wish, in the accusative case—*ηὐχοντο ηὐεργαν γενεθαι*—they wished for *the day*. But in the passage we consider—*ηὐχομην γας εγω αυτος αναθεμα ειναι απο του Χριστου*—the words *εγω αυτος*, which our translators render *myself*, and make the *subject* of the wish, are not in the accusative case, but in the nominative. With what propriety is the apostle here represented as making *himself εγω αυτος*—the subject of his wish? According to the translators' own rendering in the other passage, they should have represented *αναθεμα*—a substantive in the accusative case—as the subject of this wish: i. e. they should have represented the apostle as wishing an *anathema*, or a curse, from Christ; and not as wishing *himself* accursed from Christ. It occurs, indeed, that the translators may have viewed the strict rendering of this passage to be this—“For I myself wished to be an anathema from Christ”—and that they considered the translation they have given as an equivalent. If this were so, it may justly be remarked that they have in this instance translated much more *freely* than they usually do, and differently, as we have seen, from what they did in a similar instance; and so, moreover, as not really to give the sense of the passage, nor in the manner which best agrees with the structure of the original language. On the whole, let the words *εγω αυτος* be considered as the nominative to *ηὐχομην*, and let this word have its proper government of *αναθεμα*, in the accusative, followed by the infinitive mood *ειναι*, and this followed by *απο του Χριστου*, and let these words, preceded by the conjunction *γας*, be strictly rendered—We shall then have a translation corresponding exactly with that of Acts xxvii. 29, and the only one, it is believed, which can be considered as correct. It will stand thus—“For I myself did wish an anathema (or a curse) from

Christ"—In regard to the rest of the verse there is no dispute.

It may now be asked, what is the meaning of the whole verse? I answer, that it is at least evident that the meaning is *not* that which is communicated by the common translation:—it is evident that the apostle is not here speaking of the state of his mind when he wrote the epistle, but of what it had been long before, in his unconverted state. While he was in that deplorable state, and "exceedingly mad" against the Redeemer and his disciples, he had "wished for an anathema," or a curse, "from Christ, for," or *concerning*, "his brethren, his kindred according to the flesh." To what specifick act, or acts, he might here have reference, he does not inform us—He elsewhere tells us, however, that he had been a *blasphemer*, as well as a persecutor and injurious. We also know that he was brought up and had his residence at Jerusalem, and that he was there at the martyrdom of Stephen, and "kept the raiment" of those who slew him. This event took place a short time, probably within a year, after the crucifixion of our Lord. Is any thing more probable than that the apostle, then a young and ardent pharisee, and devoted to all the measures and views of the Jewish priesthood, was one of those who invoked upon themselves the awful curse—"his blood be upon us and upon our children?" Or if he did not join in the cry, at the very time, that hearing of it, as he certainly would, he had openly and often expressed his approbation of it, and thus made himself a party to it? And is it not probable that, together with his general character as a blasphemer, he might have this dreadful act *particularly* in view? If so, it not only gives great force to the text, but great strength and point to the whole context—Well might he, in recollection of all this, have "great heaviness and constant sorrow in his heart;" because "on his brethren, his kindred according to the flesh," he had invoked the awful anathema which he now saw abiding on them. He had, by the immeasurable grace of God and the miraculous interposition of the Saviour, been delivered from the curse

himself. But he saw that the most of them were still under it, and likely so to remain: and, in contemplating their guilty and impenitent state, he could call God to witness, that he felt "great heaviness and constant sorrow of heart." Nor was this alleviated, but greatly aggravated, when he recollect ed that the people, now reduced to this awful situation, were once the peculiar people of God—"Israelites to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever. Amen."

The author is not willing to close this extended note, in which he has attempted to correct what he conscientiously believes to be an error in the common English version of the New Testament, without remarking, that he is not among those who believe that version to be very faulty, and of course to need very frequent corrections. On the contrary he considers it as one of the very best translations that ever was, or ever can be made; and he has never seen any other English version, even of a single book of this part of the sacred volume, which, taken as *a whole*, he thought equal to the vulgar version. Yet to suppose that this version, the work of fallible men, is absolutely perfect, is an extreme on the other side. Nothing but the original is perfect. If it can be shown that, in a few instances, the eminently learned, and upright, and pious men, who formed the vulgar version, have, through that imperfection which cleaves to every thing human, not given the best rendering of a particular phrase or passage, let this be candidly shown; and if it be satisfactorily shown, a service is certainly rendered to the cause of truth. Whether this has been done, in the present instance, let competent judges decide.

### LECTURE III.

*What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?*

THE second answer, or proposition, of our catechism is thus expressed—

“The word of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us, how we may glorify and enjoy him.”

Divine revelation, as made known to us by language, is here called *the word of God*; and is said to be contained in *the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*. The book which is formed by the record of this revelation is also, you know, commonly called *the Bible*. It may be of some use to consider, very briefly, the meaning, and the propriety, of these several terms and appellations.

The word *Bible*—derived from the Greek word βιβλος, (*Biblos*)—means *the book*, by way of eminence. There is great propriety in this appellation. We could do better without all the other books in the world, than without the Bible. It is from this alone that we are fully taught the nature of God, our duty to Him, the way of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,—the way to escape a state of endless future misery, and to secure a state of endless future happiness. What is all other knowledge compared with this? But besides this, the Bible communicates knowledge of a highly important kind. It gives us the only rational account of the creation of the world which we inhabit; of the original formation and state of man; of the introduction of moral evil into the world; of the general deluge; and of the early history of mankind. As competent a judge as ever lived—Sir WILLIAM JONES—wrote on a blank leaf of his *Bible*, the following character of this sacred book—“I have carefully and

regularly perused these Holy Scriptures; and am of opinion, that the volume, independently of its divine origin, contains more sublimity, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains of eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever language they may have been written.” After such a testimony, from the first scholar of his age, one would suppose that, in the absence of better motives, *a regard to character*, would prevent any man who has a character to preserve or to acquire, from speaking contemptuously or slightly of the Bible.

The contents of the Bible are called, in the answer before us, “the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.” The term *Scriptures* is synonymous with *Writings*; and they are called *the Scriptures*—that is, *the Writings*—by way of eminence: For the same reason that the whole volume, as we have just seen, is called the Bible, or the book.

The sacred writings which were penned before the coming of Christ, are called the Old Testament; those which were afterwards penned, by the apostles and evangelists, are called the New Testament—The reason of this may be shortly stated thus: The Hebrew word בְּרִית (*Berith*) and the Greek word Διαθήκη (*Diathēkē*) signify, in each of those languages, both a covenant and a testament; and in some parts of the sacred writings, should be rendered by one of these English words, and in other parts by the other: So that there has been some difficulty, and some difference of opinion, in deciding which of these English words should be preferred, as the *general* representative, or interpretation, of the Hebrew or Greek term, of which it is the translation. On the whole, the word *Testament* has been preferred, and probably with justice. Now observe, that after the sin of our first parents, by which they broke the covenant of works, under which they were in the state of innocence, it pleased God to form with them another covenant, called the covenant of grace. This was made in virtue of the undertaking of Christ, and particularly of his atonement, in which it was to be ratified by his blood. The Mosaick or Jewish dispensation, and the Christian dispensa-

tion, *both* refer—you must be careful to remember—to the covenant of grace, sealed with the blood of Christ. Neither of these dispensations, was at all grounded on the first, or old covenant of works, which, being broken, could not be renewed. But inasmuch as the Patriarchal, and the Mosaick or Jewish dispensations, *looked forward* to the death of the *testator*, (as our Saviour is expressly called in the epistle to the Hebrews) for this reason, and for this only, all the communications from God to man which took place under those dispensations,—the inspired writings among the rest,—are called the old covenant, or the *Old Testament*. And for a like reason, all the divine communications and institutions which have been made *since* the death of Christ, under the gospel dispensation,—its inspired writings especially,—are called the new covenant, or the *New Testament*.

Thus, you perceive, the Bible consists of two testaments, each of which is an essential part of it; and therefore the language, which you sometimes hear, of *the Bible and the Testament*, is wholly incorrect—the Bible includes both Testaments.\*

The sacred writings are also called, in the answer before us, “*the word of God*.” The propriety of this appellation may be shown from the language of sacred writ. We there read, that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God,”—and “The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” Hence it appears that the scriptures are, with eminent propriety, called the *word of God*; because they are, in fact, the words which God himself addresses to men;

\* The first time that the author remembers to have seen or heard the phrase—“*The Bible and Testament*,” was in that wretched receptacle of vulgar blasphemy, Paine’s “*Age of Reason*.” Since then, however, he has observed its use, occasionally, both in oral and written speech. It is by no means unimportant to preserve the idea fully in the popular mind, that there is no *Bible* which does not contain the *whole* of God’s revealed will; and that although it may be both lawful and expedient to publish detached parts of the sacred volume, yet that all the parts are of equal authority; and that neither the Old Testament without the New, nor the New without the Old, but both conjointly, constitute the *Scriptures of truth, the Book of God*,—the *Bible*.

although men were used as instruments to utter these words, in the languages in which the divine oracles are delivered to us. And it were well if this were so kept in mind, as that whenever we read the scriptures, or hear them read, we should recollect that the voice of God is then sounding in our ears. This would be to act, in some good measure, like those Thessalonians whom St. Paul commends—"For this cause also, (says he) thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God; which effectually worketh also, in you who believe."

Here it may be proper to remark, that the second Person of the ever blessed Trinity is sometimes, in the New Testament, called by way of emphasis *the Word of God*:—because (says Parkhurst) "he hath always been the great *Reveal-er* to mankind of Jehovah's attributes and will; or because, as he himself speaketh, Matt. xi. 27, No one knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will *reveal* Him." "The Divine Person (says Macknight) who has accomplished the salvation of mankind, is called *the Word*, and *the Word of God*, Rev. xix. 13, not only because God at first created, and still governs all things by Him, but because, as men discover their sentiments and designs to one another by the intervention of words, speech, or discourse, so God, by his Son, discovers his gracious designs, in the fullest and clearest manner to men: All the various *manifestations* which he makes of *Himself* in the works of *creation, providence* and *redemption*, all the *revelations* he has been pleased to give of his *will*, are conveyed to us through Him; and therefore he is by way of eminence fitly styled **THE WORD OF GOD.**"

But though Christ our Saviour be the *living* word of God, and pre-eminently worthy of this appellation, as being the grand source and medium of all the divine communications made to intelligent beings, yet this is no reason why the communications made by his Spirit to holy men, and in their

language announced to the world, should not also be styled the word of God. By them, as we have seen, the Spirit of God did speak: and we certainly ought to have no difficulty, and no hesitation, in calling what they spake, as recorded in the sacred writings, by the same appellation which is used freely and abundantly by themselves. The remainder of the time to which this discussion must be confined, would scarcely suffice to recite to you all the passages of the sacred volume, in which parts of it are called the word of God, or in which the whole of it is so denominated, or represented. I shall repeat a few texts, as specimens of a multitude of the same character. In the Old Testament, we read that Samuel said to Saul—"Stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God—The word of God came to Shemaiah—The word of God came to Nathan—Every word of God is pure—The word of our God shall stand for ever—Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word"—

In the New Testament, we find our Saviour charging the Scribes and Pharisees with "making the word of God of none effect by their traditions." We are told that "the word of God came unto John in the wilderness"—That the multitude pressed upon our Saviour "to hear the word of God"—That the seed, in a parable which he spake, was "the word of God." "My brethren (said he) are those which hear the word of God, and do it,"—And "blessed are they that hear the word of God and do it." We are told that the apostles—"spake the word of God with all boldness"—that the "word of God increased in Jerusalem"—that "Samaria received the word of God"—that "the whole city came together to hear the word of God"—and that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Now, no one, it seems to me, can say that Jesus Christ is, in all these passages, referred to, as the word of God—without such a perversion of speech, and such a violation of the whole context, as must destroy the very use and import of language. Let none, then, have a scruple in calling the scriptures what they so frequently call themselves.

You have heard that the reason why the scriptures are called the word of God is, that they were given by divine inspiration—"holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." To the nature and evidence of this divine inspiration I propose to call your attention distinctly, in the next lecture. The remainder of the present must be employed in saying something in answer to a previous inquiry, which it is natural to make, namely, whether the writings of the Old and New Testaments, *as we now have them*, may fairly be considered as containing a faithful record of what was originally the inspired word of God? Without pretending to enter fully into this subject, I will endeavour to give you a summary of the most important facts, and of other information in relation to it.

There are, you know, some writings, mentioned and referred to in the Old Testament—such as, "The book of the wars of the Lord, the book of Jasher, the book of Nathan the prophet, the book of Gad the seer"—and several others, which have not come down to us. It is not certain, and I think not probable, that these books were ever considered by the ancient Jews as of equal authority with those which have been preserved, and which are now acknowledged, both by Jews and Christians, as canonical scripture. Perhaps they were considered as good historical records, but not as possessing divine authority. This, however, is a doubtful point. But it is not doubtful, that since they have not been transmitted to us, they have not been judged by Him who has so wonderfully watched over the preservation of his revealed truth, to contain any thing important to be known in the church of Christ—From that church we cannot believe that her divine Head has permitted any information to be withheld, which her edification and comfort demand.

In regard to the books which compose what is called *The Apocrypha*, it may be sufficient to remark, that although the most of them appear to have been written by Jews, yet that none of them were written in the Hebrew language; that they were certainly written after the days of Malachi, with

whom, according to the universal testimony of the Jews, the spirit of prophecy ceased ; that they never have been acknowledged by the Jews as canonical scripture ; that the writers of them do not themselves lay claim to inspiration ; that they certainly contain some things which are fabulous and contradictory ; that they are never quoted or referred to by the writers of the New Testament ; that they are manifestly devoid of that majesty and simplicity in the composition, which characterise the prophetick and historical writings of the Old Testament ; and that they were not received as canonical, in the first three centuries of the Christian church. Although, therefore, the Romish church receives these boooks as canonical, they are, as such, rejected by all Protestant churches. The church of England directs them to be read “for example of life and instruction of manners;” but other reformed churches regard them merely as they regard other human compositions—as containing some true history and some excellent maxims of wisdom, but still mingled with much error and imperfection.

There seems to be satisfactory evidence that the Canon of the Old Testament was settled by Ezra, down to his time, about 450 years before Christ. Ezra was himself an inspired writer ; and therefore may be considered as giving authenticity to the whole which he reviewed. He probably added the last chapter of Deuteronomy, in which, if it were supposed to be written by Moses, he would be exhibited as giving an account of his own death and burial. Several other additions, in the opinion of the learned Dean Prideaux, were made by Ezra, which infidel writers have cavilled at, as affording ground for charging the Bible with forgeries and falsehoods. But if these additions—very useful to give us some important information—were made under the same infallible guidance with which the other parts of the sacred volume were written, and by a confessedly inspired writer, you perceive that this charge is utterly futile and groundless.

The books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and Malachi, were probably placed in the sacred canon, by Simon

the Just, the last of the men who composed what has been denominated the great Synagogue.\*

The Jews, it is known, have ever been, in the highest degree, jealous of their sacred writings. They counted the words, and even the letters, of which these writings consisted, that they might be able to know with certainty that nothing had been added to, or subtracted from them. There is indeed, I think, some reason to believe, that since the time of our Saviour, they have attempted to corrupt a few passages, which went to prove most plainly that Jesus was the Christ. But the attempt was made too late to be successful. They could not corrupt all the copies. And even if they could, the whole of their sacred books had, before this time, been faithfully translated into other languages. The first version, that of the Septuagint,—so called from its being supposed to be the work of seventy-two Jews,—was made into Greek, a considerable time before the coming of Christ; and is that which is generally quoted by our Lord and his apostles in the New Testament.

The New Testament, you are aware, was written in Greek. Some think that Matthew was written in Syro-Chaldaick, the language of the Jews in the time of Christ, and for their particular benefit. This, however, is questionable. It seems most probable, that the whole of this part of the Bible, was originally penned in the Greek language,—then the most universally known of any in the world, and into which, as you have heard, the Old Testament had already been translated, and with such fidelity as to have been quoted, and thereby

\* "What the Jews called the great Synagogue, were a number of elders amounting to 120, who succeeding, some after others, in a continued series, from the return of the Jews again into Judea after the Babylonish captivity, to the time of Simon the Just, laboured in the restoring of the Jewish church and state in that country; in order whereunto the holy scriptures being the rule they were to go by, their chief care and study was, to make a true collection of those scriptures, and publish them accurately to the people. Ezra, and the men of the great Synagogue that lived in his time, completed this work as far as I have said. And as to what remained farther to be done in it, where can we better place the performing of it, and the ending and finishing of the whole thereby, than in that time, where those men of the great Synagogue ended that were employed therein, that is, in the time of Simon the Just, who was the last of them?"—*Prideaux's Con.* vol. i. pages 573, 574.

sanctioned, by our Lord himself. If the gospel of Matthew was first written in the Jews' language, it might also, in the time of the apostles, have been rendered into Greek.

It seems probable that before the death of the apostle John, who lived till about the commencement of the second century, the most of the scriptures were translated into the Latin, if not also into the Syriack tongue. The Syrians of India, it appears, still maintain that *their* New Testament is not a translation, but a copy of the original. In this there is reason to believe they err; but their translation, it is certain, was made very early,—as well as the Ethiopick, Armenian, and several others. Now, if there had ever been a wish to corrupt the New Testament,—which it does not appear that there was in the two first centuries, except by a few hereticks,—the thing could not be done; because copies had been so multiplied, and faithful translations so fully made, that the true reading could be easily ascertained.

It seems proper that I should here take some notice of the various readings of the Old and New Testaments, in the original languages; as this is a subject in regard to which erroneous notions are often entertained and propagated. These various readings were, indeed, a fruitful theme of infidel declamation, for a long time. But it led eventually, as other infidel objections have always led, to a more full and satisfactory establishment of sacred truth. Dr. KENNICOTT of England, who took the lead in this important undertaking, and a most learned Italian by the name of DE ROSSI since, have collated, or compared, all the manuscript copies of the Hebrew scriptures, which they could find in the whole world, as well as some of the earliest printed copies, and have given a fair exhibition of the various readings in all. The same has been most laboriously done, in regard to the New Testament, by a considerable number of learned men. And what has been the result? Truly the number of various readings is great, and at first sight might appear formidable. But examine them carefully and candidly, and not only does the fear of a corrupted Bible vanish, but the integrity of the sacred text, is most

wonderfully established. Ninety-nine hundredths of them—I think I may safely say—are manifest slips of the pen, mistakes or oversights of transcribers, or errors of the press—exactly like what you may see in a collection of the same kind, made by Mr. Carey, in his first edition of our translation of the Bible, printed in this city; and like what you may now find, in almost all the Bibles that you daily read. But do any of you think that you are in danger of mistaking the truths of your Bible, because of these errors of the press? You know you do not.—And competent judges have given it as their opinion, that the most corrupt copy of the Greek New Testament that can be found, if taken altogether, would not change one important truth of the sacred volume.

You will not understand, however, that among these various readings there are not some of very considerable importance—for ascertaining the true sense of particular passages, and with a view to determine whether certain clauses or periods, ought to be retained or rejected. But when the whole are brought together and compared, the true reading is, in general, not difficult to be judged of; and the mind of the biblical scholar is satisfied, and even delighted, to find that his faith in scripture is not shaken, but greatly confirmed.—To find, that although a perpetual miracle has not been wrought—for nothing less would have been sufficient—to prevent the slips and errors of transcribers and printers, yet that the providence of God has manifestly and wonderfully preserved his revealed truth, so that it has remained uncorrupted to the present time. It is well observed by Griesbach that,\* “THE WORD of GOD is not changed, when a term or two is expunged, or added, or changed for another, in the

\* Deinde non ideo *verbum Dei* mutatur, quia in textu vulgari unum alterumve vocabulum deletur aut additur aut cum alio permutatur. Quod, hebreico magis quam latino nomine, *verbum Dei* appellare solent, continetur *sensu scripturae sacrae*; non autem ita in ipsis syllabis atque literis consistet, ut mutato (ob gravissimas rationes et auctoritates, ac salvo sensu) vocabulo quodam, ipsum *Dei verbum*, hoc est doctrina Christi ac apostolorum, pereat.  
 \* \* \* \* \* *Verbum Dei manet in aeternum!* Nec incertum sit studiis critico-rum modestorum atque piorum, qui unice id agunt, ut, Deo auxiliante, quam possunt maxime *verbum divinum* reddant certissimum.—*Proleg. sect. i.*

vulgar text. That which is usually called the Word of God, agreeably to a Hebrew rather than a Latin appellation, is contained in the SENSE of sacred scripture; and does not so depend on syllables and letters, as that the real word of God, that is, the doctrine of Christ and the apostles, is destroyed, when (on the best reason and authority, and with a perfect preservation of the sense,) a particular term is changed—THE WORD OF GOD ENDURETH FOREVER! Nor is it rendered *uncertain* by the labours of modest and pious criticks, whose sole aim it is, that by the help of God, they may render the divine word as certain as possible.”

In translating the revealed will of God out of the original into other languages, an accurate knowledge of both, as well as the greatest care and fidelity, ought certainly to be possessed by the translators. And these were unquestionably the qualifications, and that in a very eminent degree, of those who formed our common English translation of the Bible. I do not believe they are chargeable with a known or wilful perversion, of a single phrase or word of the original text. After a diligent and repeated comparison, for myself, of the whole of this translation of the New Testament with the original Greek, and the various readings of Griesbach, I do think that it gives one of the best exhibitions of the truth of God, in that portion of his holy word, that ever was or ever can be made. I do not say that the translation is perfect.—It is human, and it ought to be considered as fairly open to every real improvement. Particular words and passages might doubtless be somewhat more perfectly rendered. But hundreds of proposed amendments would, if made, be, in my opinion, changes for the worse, and not for the better. And it is not without great regret that I ever hear this translation, or any part of it, spoken of in a manner which is calculated, although it be not intended, to make an unlettered Christian distrust its fidelity and general accuracy. It certainly is both faithful and accurate, beyond what can usually be met with, or hoped for, in productions merely human.

In regard to the Old Testament, although the fidelity of the

translators was as great, doubtless, in rendering that, as in the other part of their work, and although they were certainly well acquainted with the Hebrew language, yet they did lack some means of making a perfect translation, which have been furnished since their time. By the aid of these means, Lowth has given a new translation of the prophecy of Isaiah; and some other parts of the Old Testament have been translated by others, in such manner as to be, at least in the opinion of many, a sensible improvement of the old version. Yet even here, the principal improvement lies in removing some obscurities, and bringing to view some latent beauties and energies, of the original writers. So far as I can judge and recollect, they do not exhibit, in the old version, a single error so connected with either faith or practice, as to be important to the common reader.

The truth is, that almost every language has peculiarities that cannot be perfectly translated. Those who are familiar with the original languages of the Bible, see these peculiarities, and wish to transfuse them into a translation. But when they attempt it, they often find that they have not succeeded a whit better than others had done before. Dr. Young has remarked, "that the numerous attempts to translate Homer, show that Homer has never been translated." Those who read the wonderful poems of that ancient author in the original, see some beauties which they do not see in any translation. They try to transfer these beauties into their mother tongue, and they fail, like all their predecessors. It is exactly so with the incomparable originals of the holy scriptures. Many attempts at a new and more perfect translation have, on the whole, not been as successful as those which preceded them. For myself, I strongly incline to the opinion, that any new translation of the whole Bible which could now be obtained, would not, take it altogether, be as good as the old. Particular passages would probably be improved, but the defects in other respects, would, it is likely, more than counterbalance all the improvements. If we could have a Bible in which the common version should

stand as it is, with the exception of a few places in which criticks and commentators are much agreed that changes might be made for the better, and agreed too in regard to what the changes should be, it would, I think, be desirable. But such a work is scarcely to be hoped for; and to one in which the changes should be numerous and extensive, there is, in my mind, the most serious objections. As the matter now stands, those who take an interest in revealed truth, although entirely unacquainted with the original languages of the Bible, can, and often do, learn from commentators and preachers of the gospel, what can be said in favour of an improved rendering of certain words and phrases. It seems better to leave the matter here, than to attempt something which may not be at once safe and practicable.

In fine, my young friends, let nothing that you hear—and sometimes, I admit, very properly hear—about the import of this or that original word, or phrase, lead you to suspect that you do not read the true *sense* of the sacred scriptures, in the common or vulgar version of your Bibles. Take from speakers, or commentators, every real illustration of the original sacred text, which they may satisfy you that they furnish. This you ought certainly to do. But rely upon it, every thing which goes to invalidate a doctrine or truth, which you find in a plain passage of your Bible, as you now have it,—especially if it is confirmed by other passages—is a deception. Here is the true test—Is the doctrine questioned in a particular text, clearly taught in other texts? If it be, let the critick have his way, rather than trouble yourselves much about it.—He may be right, or he may be wrong. But the doctrine in question is true, if it is clearly taught in any part of the sacred volume, and especially if it be repeatedly taught. And as to all attempts to make those who cannot judge for themselves of the original languages of scripture, believe that the vulgar version does not give a right view of any important truth of revelation, they ought to be regarded as attempts of the most wicked and mischievous kind.

Let me now, in closing this lecture, beg your very serious attention to two or three remarks and advices of a practical kind, arising out of what you have heard at this time. 1. Often think on the treasure which you possess in having the Bible—having it in your own hands, and being able to read it in your own language. This is not thought on, a hundredth part as much as it ought to be; nor with any proper measure of that lively gratitude to God, for his distinguishing favour in this respect, which all who have received the favour ought to feel and to express. The Bible is really the sun of the moral system. Take it from the world, and a night of ignorance and vice, of the most awful kind, would immediately succeed. There is not now a people on the face of the earth who are not idolaters, except those whom the Bible has kept from being so. There never was a people that did not run into idolatry, of some kind, unless preserved from it by revelation. The Mahometans form no exception. The Koran borrowed from the Bible the doctrines which keep Mussulmen from worshipping idols. The most learned and refined nations of heathen antiquity, the Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans, were more various, and more sottish, in their idolatry, than the barbarous nations they despised. The Chinese, and Hindoos, in modern times, are all idolaters, in some form or other. Yes, and but for the Bible, you, my dear youth, in place of coming here this evening to worship the true God, and to hear of this blessed book, might have come here to worship stocks or stones, and some of you to be offered in sacrifice to an idol. Bind the Bible to your hearts. Never open it but with reverence, as the revealed will of God.—Never open it without gratitude to God, that he has revealed his will to man; and that he has given you the happy lot to possess this inestimable treasure.

2. Remember that where God has given much, he will require the more. “This (said our Saviour) is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.—The servant that knew his Lord’s will, and did it not, shall

be beaten with many stripes." It is the greatest of mercies to live under the light of the gospel; but it will prove the greatest of curses to die under that light—to all whom the gospel shall not have made wise unto salvation. Yes, verily, this gospel will either prove "the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death," to all who are acquainted with it. The possession of it is a privilege, a talent, a treasure, for which you have a high and solemn account to render. Now, that you may render up this account, "with joy, and not with grief," let me—

3dly. Most earnestly and tenderly counsel and exhort you, not only to read and study the scriptures with diligence and care, so that your minds may be thoroughly embued with divine truth, but to seek earnestly of God the influences of his Holy Spirit—that same blessed Agent by whom the scriptures were indited—to seal his word on your hearts, to "sanctify you through the truth." Never be content with intellectual attainments merely, in scriptural knowledge. This knowledge is valuable chiefly with a view to its *practical* influence. Let me particularly recommend that you *daily* read the holy scriptures, not only with *seriousness* but with *prayer*. Yes, let not the day pass, in ordinary circumstances, in which you do not attentively peruse at least a small portion of the word of life, accompanied with earnest prayer that God may bless it to your souls. I question if this practice was ever long continued without sensible benefit. Try it, precious youth, and may God grant that the benefit you derive from it, may be not only sensible but *saving*.

4. Take your part, cordially and actively, in endeavouring to put the sacred scriptures into the hands of those who have hitherto remained ignorant of them. It is your happiness to live at a time when vigorous exertions are making, both to translate the word of God into many languages in which it has never yet been read, and to enable and persuade those whom poverty or carelessness have hitherto kept from reading it in the languages into which it has already been translated, to avail themselves of the richest blessing which a gracious God

has ever bestowed on a guilty world. In this holy work, this heavenly charity, cherish a sacred emulation to take your full share. Whether male or female, let no individual who is not now a member of a Bible society, or who has not contributed something to the Bible cause, neglect any longer to partake in the honour, the happiness, and the duty, of patronising and promoting such institutions. To the rising generation, the whole of this labour of love, this inestimably important concern, must soon be committed. And as they will answer it to God and to perishing millions, they should look well, that they neither shrink from the labour, nor perform it slothfully. Rather let them far exceed, as we hope they will, all that their fathers have done; and receive, in the largest measure, the high reward of those, who, having “turned many unto righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.”

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## LECTURE IV.

*What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?*

IN our last lecture we entered on the discussion of the second answer in our catechism, in which it is affirmed that—“the word of God, contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, is the only rule to direct us, how we may glorify and enjoy him.”

It is not my intention to recapitulate any part of what was then delivered; as we shall need the whole of our time to discuss the important points to which it was intimated that your attention would now be called. These are, the nature and evidences of divine inspiration and revelation;—subjects which have filled volumes, and of which it will, of course, be practicable to give you, in a single lecture, (and more we cannot devote to them,) only a general outline—a *summary*.

*statement* of the principal matters which they embrace. It is hoped, however, that enough will be said, to enable every attentive hearer to give a reason for the hope that is in him; a reason why he is a Christian, and why he cherishes the high expectations which Christianity inspires.

If we make a distinction between inspiration and revelation we may say, that by INSPIRATION we understand those divine communications which are made to the minds of *individuals*; by REVELATION, the same communications made known to *the world*, by those who receive them from God. Revelation is a *generick*, inspiration a *specifick* term. The Deity, usually, first reveals his mind and will to individuals, and then through them to the world. No one has a right to demand or expect that others should believe he has a direct communication from God, without verifying his pretensions by an undeniably miracle.\*

We have nothing to do with any other claims to revelation,

\* When this lecture was delivered, the author read to his audience a number of passages from "DICK's Essay on the Inspiration of the Scriptures," and recommended the careful perusal of the whole. That essay, in his opinion, is incomparably the best publication on the subject, which he has seen. DICK's explanation, in regard to the *words* or language of the sacred writers, is believed to be the only one that can be defended as rational and satisfactory.

The substance of it is contained in the following extract:

"A question of very great importance demands our attention, while we are endeavouring to settle, with precision, the notion of the inspiration of the scriptures; it relates to the words in which the sacred writers have expressed their ideas. Some think, that in the choice of words they were left to their own discretion, and that the language is human, though the matter be divine; while others believe, that in their expressions, as well as in their sentiments, they were under the infallible direction of the Spirit. It is the last opinion which appears to be most conformable to truth, and it may be supported by the following reasoning.

"Every man, who hath attended to the operations of his own mind, knows that we think in words; or that, when we form a train or combination of ideas, we clothe them with words; and that the ideas which are not thus clothed, are indistinct and confused. Let a man try to think upon any subject, moral or religious, without the aid of language, and he will either experience a total cessation of thought, or, as this seems impossible, at least while we are awake, he will feel himself constrained, notwithstanding his utmost endeavours, to have recourse to words, as the instrument of his mental operations. As a great part of the scriptures was suggested or revealed to the writers; as the thoughts or sentiments, which were perfectly new to them, were conveyed into their minds by the Spirit, it is plain that they must have been accompanied with words proper to express them; and, consequently, that the words were dictated by the same influences on the mind which communicated the ideas. The ideas could not have come without the words, because without them they could not have been conceived."

than those which we make for what is contained in our Bible. In no other revelation, at present known to us, do we believe; and if this be not defensible, the pretensions of any other cannot certainly be shown to be better founded.

1. Then, we can have no hesitation to assert, that a supernatural revelation from God is *possible*. I explicitly mention a *supernatural* revelation, because God has unquestionably revealed himself to us in his works;—and our reason also, by which we make all just inferences and conclusions, as well as many valuable discoveries, is his gift. But by the revelation of which we now speak, we mean some important discoveries, which the works of nature and all the exercise and ingenuity of human reason employed upon them, could never make. We here assert that such a revelation is *possible*. None who admit the being and attributes of God—and with those who deny them we do not now contend—will be likely to say, that it is not possible for a Being of infinite power and wisdom to make a revelation, such as we have specified, to his creature man; and in such way too as perfectly to satisfy the creature that the revelation is from God. To deny this is, at once, to limit the power and the wisdom of the Supreme Being. It cannot, therefore, be denied. It not only involves no contradiction or absurdity, but it is no more, in fact, than to assert that God, who has actually revealed himself to us in his works, can farther reveal himself, by additional and indubitable communications.

2. Revelation is not only possible, but *desirable*; and if made, must be *highly useful*. Lord Herbert, the most learned of the English deists, has written largely and elaborately, to show that what he calls the light of nature is sufficient, without revelation, to teach us the knowledge of God and of our duty. He has been ably and triumphantly answered by several writers, especially by Hallyburton; but what is remarkable, he has virtually answered himself. Strange as it may seem, it is indubitably true, that he declares that he asked, and as he believed, received a revelation, or a miraculous intimation, to decide the momentous question,

whether he should, or should not, publish his book *De veritate*; a book in which he sets himself to prove that all revelations, and all miracles, are unnecessary. You may find a fair transcript of the whole passage, in Leland's View of the Deistical Writers.\*

It does seem to me, that no candid deist, will refuse to admit that it would be desirable, and so far as we can see, useful, that the Deity should, if I may so say, *speak out*, and tell us plainly the truth or falsehood of a great many important and most interesting points, about which human reason has been at a loss in every age of the world. For as one has well observed, “whatever the light of nature could do for man, before reason was depraved, it is evident that it has done

\* The passage referred to in the lecture is the following:—Speaking of a writer who had seen a manuscript life of Lord Herbert drawn up by himself, Leland says—“After having observed, that Lord Herbert's tract, *De veritate*, was his favourite work, he produceth a large extract relating to it in that Lord's own words, signifying, that though it had been approved by some very learned men to whom he had shown it, among whom he mentions Grotius, yet as the frame of his whole book was so different from what had been written heretofore on this subject, and he apprehended he should meet with much opposition, he did consider, whether it were not better for him a while to suppress it. And then his lordship proceeds thus:—

“‘ Being thus doubtful, in my chamber, one fair day in the summer, my casement being open towards the south, the sun shining clear, and no wind stirring, I took my book, *De veritate*, in my hands, and, kneeling on my knees, devoutly said these words—*O thou eternal God, author of this light which now shines upon me, and giver of all inward illuminations; I do beseech thee, of thine infinite goodness, to pardon a greater request than a sinner ought to make: I am not satisfied enough, whether I shall publish this book: if it be for thy glory, I beseech thee give me some sign from heaven; if not, I shall suppress it.* I had no sooner spoken these words, but a loud, though yet gentle noise, came forth from the heavens, (for it was like nothing on earth,) which did so cheer and comfort me, that I took my petition as granted, and that I had the sign I demanded; whereupon also I resolved to print my book. This, how strange soever it may seem, I protest before the eternal God, is true; neither am I any way superstitiously deceived herein; since I did not only clearly hear the noise, but in the serenest sky that ever I saw, being without all cloud, did, to my thinking, see the place from whence it came.’”

On this surprising but unquestionable fact Leland very justly remarks:—“I cannot help thinking, that if any writer, zealous for Christianity, had given such an account of himself, as praying for and expecting a sign from heaven to determine his doubt, whether he should publish a book he had composed in favour of the Christian cause; and, upon hearing a noise, which he took to be from heaven, had looked upon it as a mark of the divine approbation, and as a call to publish that book; it would have passed for a high fit of enthusiasm, and would no doubt have subjected the author to much ridicule among the gentlemen that oppose revealed religion. What judgment they will pass upon it in Lord Herbert's case I do not know.”—Leland's *View of Deistical Writers*, vol. i. pp. 42—45.

little for him since. Reason, though necessary to examine the evidence and authority of divine revelation (which is its proper office) yet is incapable of giving us all needful discoveries of God, the way of salvation, or the manner in which we may be brought into a state of communion with God.”\* PALEY—certainly among the most candid and conceding of disputants—cuts the question before us short, in this manner —“I deem it (says he) unnecessary to prove that mankind stood in need of a revelation; because I have met with no serious person, who thinks that even under the Christian revelation, we have too much light, or any assurance which is superfluous.”

3. If revelation be clearly possible, desirable, and if made, calculated to be highly useful, we think that we may fairly add, that it is also *probable*. It is fully admitted that *the fact*, whether this revelation has actually been made, must be determined by the proper and competent evidence. But it is of some importance, and is always so considered in alleging evidence, that we do not offer it to establish a fact *improbable* in itself. We think that we have no lack of evidence in the present case; but we wish it to be considered, whether *probability* is not clearly on our side at the outset. And we do think, that when we consider how needful and useful a revelation must be, and how the goodness of the Creator has provided for the wants and the happiness of all his creatures, the probability strongly is, that he has provided for this great want of his creature man—the creature who is certainly the head of this lower creation. We think that it is not analogous to all that we see of the divine goodness, in supplying the wants and natural desires of his other sensitive creatures, even of the lowest order, that he should leave the noblest of them with wants and desires which are not supplied or provided for, if the revelation in question be not given. Here, too, it ought, in all fairness, to be mentioned, that a very large proportion of that light and knowledge in regard to the

\* Buck's Theological Dictionary.

true God and his attributes, which modern deists possess, they have actually derived from that very revelation which they attempt to prove to be unnecessary. The truth of this matter may be learned—and can only be learned—from the state of things among the heathen, even the best informed of them. They, too, it is manifest, derived some aid from traditional revelation. But even with this aid, their ideas of the Deity, of his attributes, and of many important points of moral duty, were lamentably defective and erroneous. Among the *mass* of mankind, the ignorance which prevailed was awful and shocking in the extreme. It was emphatically true, according to the strong language of scripture, that “Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people.”

It has, we are aware, been made an objection against the Bible, that while it claims, to be a revelation of high importance, it is known only to a small part, comparatively, of those whom it ought to benefit. But if the true state of this fact be carefully attended to, it will be found exactly analogous to what takes place in the divine dispensations, in almost every other respect. *Information* of every kind, is but very partially communicated to the mass of mankind;—they remain in gross and grovelling ignorance. The precious blessing of civil liberty, likewise, is not enjoyed by a hundredth part of the inhabitants of the globe. Yet knowledge and civil liberty are the gifts of God, intended for the benefit of mankind, and in themselves unspeakably valuable. They make the world much better than it would be without them; and in due time, we hope and expect that the benefit of them will reach the whole human family. The case is the same—only a great deal stronger—with respect to divine revelation. It has introduced into the world, and continues in it, all the correct knowledge of God and of his attributes, and all adequate views of our duty to Him and to each other, which are possessed by our race. This knowledge has been, and now is, of incalculable use and benefit to the world. To those who possess it fully, its value is inestimable: and we know that it is promised in this revelation itself—and certainly the signs of

the times in which we live strongly indicate that the promise is now in a train of actual and rapid fulfilment—that this knowledge shall “cover the earth as the waters do the seas;”—that the sacred scriptures shall be read in every language under heaven, and their benign effects be experienced by the whole race of man.

Having thus, very briefly, shown that revelation is possible, desirable, useful, and probable, let us now consider the direct evidence that it has been given, and is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

The proof or evidence that the scriptures contain a divine revelation, has usually been divided into two kinds—*external* and *internal*. By external evidence is meant that which is derived from what has taken place in the world, to prove that the Bible contains the revealed will of God. By internal evidence is meant, that which is furnished *simply by a careful perusal of the scriptures themselves*. There is certainly a just foundation for this division; and yet a rigorous regard to it, in so short a view of the subject as I am to give, might rather embarrass than assist my design. I shall, therefore, regard it only so far as may be found convenient.

Let us begin with the internal evidence, or that which appears to an attentive and impartial reader, on the very face of the scriptures themselves. Of this evidence a better summary statement cannot, I think, be made, than that which we have in our Confession of Faith, in these words—“The heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole, (which is to give all glory to God,) the full discovery which it makes of the only way of man’s salvation; the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it, (the scripture) doth abundantly evidence itself to be the word of God.”

The first item of evidence mentioned in this statement is, “the heavenliness of the matter” which the sacred volume contains. This may well claim our attention. It is incapable of denial, that no other book in the world, nor all other

books taken together, give us such just and sublime ideas as are given in the Bible of God, and of his attributes; of the kind of worship and obedience which he requires; of the nature of holy communion with Him; and of his moral laws, or our duties to each other. The truth is, that in comparison with what the scriptures teach on these subjects, all the writings of the heathen philosophers, legislators and sages, are darkness itself.

Where and by whom then was this wonderful book—which in the last lecture I properly called the sun of the moral system—where, and by whom, was it written? It was written in a country scarcely thought worth notice by the great ancient heathen nations; written by men whom those nations despised as barbarians. A considerable part of it was written by shepherds, and peasants, and fishermen. Could such a book be produced by such men, and in such circumstances, unless God had revealed his mind and will to them, and taught them how and what to write? To believe that this book, so superior to all others, could be produced by the men who wrote it, without divine aid, is, to my apprehension, to believe something far more wonderful and incredible, than all that the Bible contains. It is to believe that an effect exists without any adequate cause.

2. The efficacy of the doctrine of this book proves it divine. It certainly has had infinitely more influence, in reforming and enlightening mankind—in making them better in all respects—than all the writings of the heathen sages, that were ever given to the world. How is this to be accounted for, if this book be not of divine origin, and if the knowledge it imparts be not accompanied by a divine influence? Hundreds and thousands of the best, and many of them among the wisest men, that ever lived, have declared that the doctrines and truths of the Bible were the means of changing their tempers, hearts, and lives. It will not do to call this enthusiasm, or delusion. The parties thus wrought upon and changed, have often been far more remarkable for sobriety, discretion, wisdom, learning, benevolence, and usefulness,

than any of those who make the charge. No rational account can be given of this fact, but that holy scripture has been made “the power and the wisdom of God,” to produce such an effect.

3. The majesty of the style of scripture, is another evidence of its divine origin. Recollect what has been said of the authors of these writings.—Now, we admit that it is in the early periods of society that sublime compositions are usually produced. But what has given such a superiority, in this respect, to the Jewish and Christian writings? In all that relates to the Deity, his attributes, works and worship, compare the compositions of the Bible with those of the most elevated strains of the heathen poets, or other writers, and you instantly perceive a difference that strikes you with astonishment. Had time permitted, it was my intention to have given you, from Burgh’s *Dignity of Human Nature*, a comparison which he makes, between what he says has been considered the most sublime description of Homer, and one of the Psalms of David, both in a literal version. His remark is, that the extract from Homer, in this comparison, appears like “a capucinade, a mere Grub-street performance.”\* There certainly never have been any other writers that did even approach the majesty and sublimity of the writers of scripture, in what relates to the Deity. And this cannot be rationally accounted for, but on the supposition that these writers had higher and juster notions of the Deity than others, and were raised above themselves, by divine inspiration.

4. The consent of all the parts of scripture, is another evidence of their divinity. This harmony of the sacred writers, when fairly viewed, is indeed wonderful. The different writers were not only of different ranks in life, and of different education, but they wrote at periods of time far distant from each other, and on subjects of very various kinds; and often without knowing more than a part, at most, of what had been written by others. From the time that Moses wrote

\* See the passage referred to, at the close of this lecture.

the Pentateuch, to the time that John penned the Apocalypse, was a period of about fifteen hundred years. Now, that a series of writers, of such different characters, and discussing such different topicks, should be adding something to the sacred volume through all this period, and often with only a very partial knowledge of what was there before, and yet that there should be no contrariety, no inconsistency, but the most entire consent and harmony of the whole, this we affirm has no parallel,—nothing resembling it, among merely human productions: and we affirm that it can be satisfactorily accounted for in no other way, than by saying that these writers were all guided by one and the same Spirit of infallible truth. Many attempts, we know, have been made to find some inconsistency of one portion of scripture with another; but they have uniformly led to investigations which have more clearly demonstrated the entire agreement of the whole.

5. “The scope of the whole scripture, which is to give all glory to God,” is another internal evidence of its divinity. The whole sacred volume, taken together, is calculated to exhibit the Deity as glorious in all his attributes;—to exhibit Him as infinitely worthy of the highest admiration, esteem and love, of all intelligent and moral beings—to show that they were created, as I have heretofore shown, to behold and promote his glory, and to find their supreme happiness, both here and to all eternity, in this high and delightful service. This we might naturally expect in a revelation from God, and we find it in this revelation;—find it as it is not found in any other compositions that ever were written. This book, therefore, we believe came from God himself.

6. The full discovery which the Bible makes of “the only way of man’s salvation,” affords a strong internal evidence of its divine origin. The insuperable difficulty, among the best of the heathen philosophers and moralists, was, to collect any entirely satisfactory evidence of the immortality of the soul, and that God would both forgive and reward the penitent sinner. How, indeed, can these things be certainly known, unless they are revealed. That reason and observation might,

and did afford some probability, and excite some hope in regard to them, we admit. But on such infinitely interesting topicks, the mind is deeply anxious for *certainty*, for *full assurance*: and this never could be obtained, but by revelation. Here, blessed be God, we have it. “Life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel:” and here—and only here—the whole plan of redeeming mercy, is clearly and gloriously exhibited.

By revelation, and by revelation alone, we learn, that in the perfect unity of the divine essence, there are three distinctions, usually called *persons*, and that each of these divine persons bears a part in the great work of man’s redemption and salvation. Here, and here only, we learn of a way of pardon, in consistency with the justice of God, through the atonement and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here we learn, that sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit: and that thus the human soul—redeemed by the blood of the Son of God, and meetened for glory by his own blessed Spirit—shall be admitted to perfect and endless felicity in heaven. This plan of salvation never did enter, and never could have entered, the mind of any human being, if it had not been revealed. But when revealed, the glory and excellence of it are seen to be inexpressible. It has accordingly been the reliance of the best of men, even in the trying hour of death—Of the reality of it, as the truth of God, they have doubted no more than of their own existence.

I have now finished what I propose to offer on the *internal evidence* which the scriptures contain, that they are a revelation from God. I have, by no means, touched on all the points of evidence of this kind; and I have unavoidably been very brief on each point that I have noticed. Yet I have said more than I should, but for the consideration that it is of the internal evidence of the divinity of the scriptures, that persons of all descriptions can best and most satisfactorily judge for themselves. It is indeed the internal evidence of the truth of revelation which, at last, most completely satisfies *every* mind, and

dispels every doubt. I give it as my decisive opinion, that any man who will carefully, diligently, candidly and prayerfully study the Holy Scriptures, and compare one part with another, will at length, and before long, have no doubt left, that there he finds the revealed will of God.

Let us now, very briefly, consider the *external* evidence that the scriptures contain a divine revelation. Among the numerous sources of this kind of evidence, I have time to mention only two of the chief—miracles and prophecy:—If, indeed, there be any just ground for distinguishing between prophecy and miracles.

A miracle has been defined “an effect contrary to the established constitution and course of things, or a sensible deviation from the known laws of nature.” That a miracle should ever be wrought for a trivial purpose, is certainly contrary to all our ideas of fitness—to all our perceptions of the wisdom, regularity, order and stability, which we observe in the works of God. But that for a great and important purpose, there should be some deviation from the established laws and order which we observe in the works of creation and providence, is in no respect unworthy of the power, the wisdom, or the goodness of the great Author of nature. “Man (says Dr. Gleig) is unquestionably the principal creature in this world, and apparently the only one in it, who is capable of being made acquainted with the relation in which he stands to his Creator. We cannot, therefore, doubt, but that such of the laws of nature as extend not their operation beyond the limits of this earth, were established chiefly, if not solely, for the good of mankind; and if, in any particular circumstances, that good can be more effectually promoted by an occasional deviation from those laws, such a deviation may be reasonably expected.” Now, when we consider, as already shown, how desirable, useful, and even necessary, a revelation is, to teach man the true knowledge of God and the method in which he may be restored to the favour and eternal fruition of his Creator, we cannot deem it unworthy of infinite wisdom and goodness, and therefore not unreasonable, that we should expect

some occasional deviation from the established laws of nature, for this great and important purpose. And you will observe, that in whatever degree it is reasonable to expect that a revelation should be made to mankind, in that same degree it is reasonable to expect that miracles should be wrought—For without a miracle, the supernatural communication could not be verified to the world at large.

When any one affirms that he has a supernatural communication to make, we justly demand of him the evidence of this. And let it be remembered, that this is the doctrine of scripture, and the test to which, as I have heretofore intimated, all who profess to have received revelations ought, in all cases, to be brought. If what they profess to teach were a mere matter of reason, we might judge of it by reason; or if a reliance were placed on argument, we would listen to the argument. But here is a communication to be made, of which reason is not, abstractly, the competent judge; and which demands regard, not from argument, but from divine authority. Show us, then, the authority by which your demand is sanctioned. This can be done, only by working an undeniable miracle. If this be done, but not otherwise, we submit to the demand. We submit, because we cannot believe that He alone who can control and change the laws of nature, would do it to confirm a falsehood; and by doing so, to impose in the most grievous manner, on his rational creatures. Miracles, therefore, are essential to a revelation for the good of mankind at large; and when *really* wrought, they give it a divine sanction.

That almost every kind of religion in the world has professed to have miracles connected with its pretensions, we admit. But mark a difference, which at once annihilates this objection, as it relates to the Jewish and Christian systems. Yes, although this objection has been so much dwelt on, yet it is an undeniable fact, that the Jewish and Christian systems are the *only ones* since the foundation of the world, that have professed to take their ORIGIN from *miracles, wrought in the face of the world, and of which both friends and enemies*

*might judge.* This is what those systems professed to do, and they succeeded in it; and this has never been attempted, with success, by any other religion of which the world has yet heard. No other religion, I repeat, has ever *begun* its career, and professed to *rest* all its pretensions on *open undeniable miracles*, wrought in the presence of foes as well as friends, and succeeded in the attempt. Mahomet did not found his pretensions on miracles. He disclaimed this. He professed indeed to have divine communication; but they were all in *secret*. He avowed that his religion was to be propagated by the sword; and accordingly by the sword it was propagated.

Mr. Hume is the infidel writer of most note who has opposed the credibility of miracles. But he has been answered by Dr. Campbell, in a manner which seems to me to preclude all reply. The answer is the most satisfactory piece of controversy that I have ever read. Mr. Hume's bold position is, that *no testimony whatever*, can warrant a belief in miracles, because miracles are a violation of the laws of nature; and all our experience, he says, tells us that the laws of nature are never violated, while the same experience tells us that human testimony is often false—therefore, it is more reasonable to believe that the testimony is false, than that miracles are true. This is certainly very specious, and yet it is perfectly deceptive. What does he mean by *experience*? Would he confine it to what he and those with whom he had conversed, had seen or observed for themselves? No—he was a historian himself, and would believe *well authenticated history*. History and written records, then, make a part of experience. And does all history say that miracles must be false? So far from it, that there is no better authenticated history on earth, than that which attests that miracles are true. The whole then, is a perfect sophism, built on the equivocal use of the word *experience*.

If miracles were frequently wrought, they would lose their effect and use; because they would then come to be considered in the light of the ordinary course of things. Had the

sun never risen and set but once, it would probably have been regarded as the greatest miracle that was ever recorded. We cannot, therefore, look for miracles in every age. They were given to sanction God's revealed will, and that being done, they have had their use and have ceased.

Testimony can give us as *satisfactory*, though not as *impressive* evidence of miracles, as if we had witnessed them ourselves. Miracles are just as easy to Almighty power, as the carrying on of the most ordinary operations of nature. If miracles, then, are wrought, in which those who witness them cannot be deceived, *testimony* may verify this fact to others, as fully as any other fact. All we want is *honest competent witnesses*. How do we know then that we have such witnesses, in regard to the miracles—let us say—of the New Testament? This is a proper and rational inquiry: and I answer it by taking a single miracle—which being authenticated, all the rest will be found to be connected with it. I take the resurrection of Christ from the dead. None deny that he was put to death on the cross. The Roman historians, the Jews, Christians, all attest and agree in this. His apostles affirm that he rose from the dead on the third day; that he ate, and drank, and repeatedly conversed with them, during forty days after his resurrection: that at one time he appeared to five hundred; and that at last, in the presence of his apostles, and in their open broad day view, he ascended into heaven. Here is a fact, in regard to which the apostles could not be deceived. They knew the Saviour perfectly; they had been his intimate companions for three years; they were not easily convinced that he was risen, although he had told them repeatedly that he would rise. One of them was very incredulous; but they were, at last, all convinced: so perfectly convinced, that they spent their lives in publishing this event, and the whole gospel system connected with it, to the world. They did this, and could not be deterred or prevented from doing it; although they were hated, and despised, and persecuted, by almost the whole Jewish nation, for persisting in their testimony. They endured every

indignity, every hardship, every loss and privation, yet they still persisted ; and at last died martyrs to their testimony, sealing it with their blood. No falsehood ever was, or ever can be, thus attested. And we have four separate histories of this transaction, as well as of the whole life and other miracles of Christ, all agreeing in the same account : and we have not only as much, but far more evidence that those histories were written by the men whose names they bear, and very shortly after the transactions recorded, than we have that Homer wrote the Iliad, Virgil the Eneid, or Livy and Tacitus the histories which bear their names. On this solid ground it is that we believe the miracles of the New Testament. It cannot be deceptive : no falsehood, I repeat, ever was, or ever can be, attested in this manner. Miracles, therefore, have been wrought, to confirm the doctrines and facts of the New Testament, as well as the Old. The God of truth has stamped these doctrines and facts with his own signet, and we rest on them without a reasonable doubt of their verity.

*Prophecy* we are next to consider. This, indeed, is a kind of miracle. For who, without the dictation of Him who sees the end from the beginning, can foretel, with certainty and particularity, events that shall take place hundreds of years after the time of the prediction ; and this too when, at the time of prediction, nothing is more unlikely to happen than many of these events. But the Bible abounds with prophecies of this very character; prophecies, some of which have been fulfilled; some that are now fulfilling; and some which are yet to be accomplished.

When Egypt, and Assyria, and ancient Tyre, were in all their power and splendour, it was prophesied that they should be utterly blotted out—the former as nations, and the latter as a mart for commerce. These prophecies have been literally fulfilled. A still older prophecy—that which predicted that it should be the character of the descendants of ISHMAEL, that their “ hand should be against every man, and every man’s hand against them,” and yet that they should never be

subdued—has been fulfilling for more than three thousand years, and is yet fulfilling. The Arabs boast, at this hour, of their descent from Abraham: they have always been, as they now are, depredators on all surrounding people; and yet, though frequently worsted and partially conquered, they have never been subdued.

Seven hundred years before the birth of Christ, Isaiah predicted his coming, and described his character. Read this prediction and description, in the 53d chapter of Isaiah, and you really seem to be reading a history of Christ, rather than a prophecy concerning him. Daniel, also, prophesied of the Messiah, by his very name; and marked the period of his advent so exactly, that it seems impossible to deny that it was Christ Jesus, to whom he referred. That these prophecies were not written after the events to which we refer their fulfilment, there is the best of all evidence, in the fact, that the Jews, who deny their fulfilment, have been the depositaries of the books which contain the predictions.

Our Lord, in the most remarkable and explicit manner, predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, and warned his disciples to flee from it; which all accounts testify that they did. Jerusalem was destroyed in the seventieth year of the Christian era; and before that time there is the best evidence that the whole evangelical history was published, except the gospel of John, in which this prediction is not found—probably because he had seen it fulfilled. But in this same prediction of our Lord, there is an intimation in regard to the Jews, which has been fulfilling from the destruction of their city and temple to the present time; and of which we can judge, in part, from our own observation. “Jerusalem (said the Saviour) shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” What a remarkable accomplishment has there been, of this declaration? Julian, the apostate Roman emperor, attempted to rebuild the city and temple of Jerusalem, that he might falsify this prediction. But although he entrusted the enterprise to one of his ablest generals, heaven blasted the attempt—Jerusalem is yet trodden down of the

Gentiles, and the Jews are scattered over all the earth. Of this we are the living witnesses; after the lapse of nearly eighteen centuries, since the publication of the prophecy.

Farther—It is conclusively implied in our Lord's prediction, that when “the time of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled,” the Jewish state shall be restored: and the Apostle Paul, in the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans, shows at length that it is the purpose of God, when “the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in,” that the Jews shall “be grafted into their own olive tree”—shall be restored to that church of the living God which was originally constituted among their progenitors, and from which, by their unbelief, they will so long have suffered an exclusion. This prophecy, although not as yet fulfilled, has been, from the time when it was uttered, and is at the present hour, in such a train of fulfilment, as to leave no reasonable doubt of its eventual and perfect accomplishment. The Jews have been preserved as a separate people, amidst all their dispersions and all their grievous persecutions. While other conquered, captured, and dispersed nations and tribes have, without a single exception, melted away, and at last been amalgamated with the mass of the population in which they have been mingled, the Jews are as much a distinct people now, as they were at the close of the Babylonish captivity. Is not this a presumption of the strongest kind, that they have been preserved by the special providence of God, for that restoration and that conversion to the Christian faith, which the scriptures assure us are yet to take place? In addition to all, consider how the feelings of at least some Christian nations, in regard to the Jews, have within a few years past begun to be changed, from that extreme hatred and abhorrence which had so long existed, to pity and sympathy, and a degree of kindness; consider the lively interest which many Christians, both in Europe and America, are now taking in the amelioration of the condition of this long neglected and suffering people, and the efforts which are made and the prayers which are offered, for their conversion to the faith of Christ; consider that a number of remarkable conver-

sions have actually taken place, and that a spirit of anxious inquiry, to a greater extent and degree than I believe has ever before existed, has been awakened among the Jews themselves, in relation to the truth of the New Testament, which has recently been translated into their sacred language, and pretty widely diffused among them—consider all this, and it seems to me that no unprejudiced mind can retain a serious doubt, either of the final accomplishment of the prophecy we consider, or that the time of its fulfilment is drawing nigh.

On the subject of prophecy I shall only further observe, that what is intimated in the predictions we have been considering, namely, that “the fulness of the Gentiles” shall be brought into the Christian church, is elsewhere explicitly and repeatedly foretold; and that the signs of the times in which we live seem to indicate the near approach of the millennial age—the age when the great adversary of souls “shall deceive the nations no more till a thousand years be fulfilled;” when “the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters do the seas;” and “all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.” More I think has been done for the spread of the gospel within the last thirty years, than had been done in the twelve preceding centuries: and it does seem to me that no one can take a just survey of the world at the present time, and not be convinced that the glorious days so long predicted and promised to the church, and the subject of her unceasing prayers and hopes, are even now beginning to dawn on the world.

Thus, my young friends, have I laid before you a brief and imperfect statement of a part of the abundant evidence we possess, that the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are, in deed and in truth, the word of God. I shall close the lecture with three short but important advices, arising out of what you have now heard.

1. Never read infidel books to gratify curiosity, or as a matter of amusement. Curiosity and amusement are improper motives to have influence in so serious and sacred a concern as that which relates to the question, whether God

has, or has not, spoken to us in the Bible: and if you are found to trifle with this subject, you will do it at an awful peril. Those who are called to defend our holy religion, whether among the clergy or the laity, must read and examine the writings in which that religion is attacked, in order to make its defence. But all unnecessary and voluntary familiarity with these publications, is certainly dangerous and injurious—to those who are not prepared to answer the subtle objections of learned infidels, they may be fatally pernicious; and even to those who are well prepared to answer them, they may occasion much trouble and vexation. They may fill the mind with harassing thoughts, which although the reason and the judgment are perfectly satisfied that they ought not to be indulged, and that the objections suggested have been most solidly and repeatedly answered, may, notwithstanding, still occur, and for a long time worry and torment, though they never produce a change of opinion, or have any effect on practice. Do not mistake me, my young friends—I am not advising you to a blind and implicit faith in the truth of revelation. If you have time and inclination, and the means of doing it, and find it necessary to your satisfaction or stability in religion, examine this whole subject thoroughly. Read with care, and seriousness, and candour, and prayer for light and direction, the ablest writers on both sides of the question; and at the same time read largely in the Bible itself. For the result of such a course I have no anxiety. I solemnly believe that it never yet ended in any other way than in a deep and settled conviction that our Scriptures contain a revelation from God. It is not against *inquiry* that I advise and warn you, but against inquiry *unfairly conducted*; and against meddling with profane and blasphemous writings as *a matter of choice*, or without a sufficient reason for doing it. Against this, as pregnant with certain mischief, I do most seriously warn you; and I beseech you to remember the warning to the end of life.

2. Study the sacred scriptures continually, and become as accurate as you can in your knowledge of all that they con-

tain. The advantages resulting from a correct and familiar knowledge of the contents of the sacred volume, are not easily enumerated. Such a knowledge has a far more extensive influence in enlightening the understanding, and in cherishing a just taste, and in giving us a right view of the human heart and character, than is commonly imagined. It puts us in possession of the only perfectly correct system of morals; and shows us the grounds of many of the laws and institutions of our country. It gives us a clear view of the infinite superiority of the religious system of the Bible to the systems of the most refined nations of heathen antiquity, teaches us wherein the true and acceptable worship of God consists, and qualifies us to hear sermons with advantage, and to judge rightly, not only of them but of all the other disquisitions on the subject of religion, whether written or spoken, which profess to be derived from them or sanctioned by them. Make use of all the assistances to which you have access, to improve your knowledge of the sacred scriptures; consult maps, plates, travels, geographical and historical discussions. Without some knowledge of the country, habits, and manners, to which the sacred writers refer, they cannot be clearly and fully understood; and reading on these subjects is at once both pleasant and profitable. Oh, that it could take the place of that eager perusal of worthless, and worse than worthless publications, in which so many youth of both sexes, now consume so large a portion of their precious time! Do not neglect the aid of commentators; and yet do not take your religious system implicitly from any of them. Read and judge of the sacred scriptures for yourselves; always remembering that for yourselves you must answer to the Searcher of hearts, for the manner in which you receive and treat his revealed will.

3. Remember that there is a *saving knowledge* of the holy scriptures, which differs from all merely speculative knowledge, however profound or accurate. Memorable indeed is that petition in the last intercessory prayer of our blessed Saviour,—“Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is

truth." Your own observation may satisfy you, that there are many who are by no means ignorant of the proper import of the language of the sacred volume, who yet are not sanctified by the truths which it teaches and reveals. To produce this effect, the truth must be set home on the heart and conscience, by the operation of the same Holy Spirit by whom the sacred scriptures were indited. Speaking of this office of the Holy Ghost, the Saviour himself says—"When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment—He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you." The Saviour hath also said—"If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" You cannot desire more encouragement than is here given you, to ask earnestly and perseveringly the influence and aid of that Almighty Agent, by whom the truths which he hath revealed are made known, in their saving influence, to the souls of men—by whom the human mind is enlightened into "the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus," and formed to such a spiritual taste and love of the truth, and made to know such a sweet and powerful application of it, as to render the language of the Psalmist the most expressive of the views and feelings which it produces, of any that can be devised—"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether; more to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward—The entrance of thy word giveth light, it giveth understanding unto the simple—Oh, how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." When you once experience this blessed effect of the divine word—an effect which has

been actually experienced by many thousands in every age of the church, you will want no further evidence of its divine origin: you will know for yourselves that it is the power and the wisdom of God unto salvation to “every one that believeth.” And till this effect is experienced, remember that the great design for which the sacred oracles have been given, has not been answered in your case; that you have hitherto perused them comparatively in vain; nay, that the light which you have derived from them has served greatly to aggravate all your offences against God, and that without repentance it will greatly aggravate your final condemnation. Whenever, therefore, you read the holy scriptures, breathe forth the ardent aspirations of your souls for the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, that his word may become “quick and powerful—to open your eyes, and to turn you from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that you may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Amen.

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The passage referred to in page 63, is as follows:

“The loftiest passage, in the most sublime of all human productions, is the beginning of the eighth book of *Homer's Iliad*. There the greatest of all human imaginations labours to describe, not a hero, but a God; not an inferior, but the Supreme God; not to show his superiority to mortals, but to the heavenly powers; and not to one, but to them all united. The following is a verbal translation of it.

“‘The saffron-coloured morning was spread over the whole earth; and Jupiter, rejoicing in his thunder, held an assembly of the gods upon the highest top of the many-headed *Olympus*. He himself made a speech to them, and all the gods together listened.

“‘Hear me, all ye gods, and all ye goddesses, that I may say what my soul in my breast commands. Let not therefore any female deity, or any male, endeavour to break through my word; but all consent together, that I may most quickly perform these works. Whomsoever, therefore, of the gods I shall understand to have gone by himself, and of his own accord, to give assistance either to the *Trojans* or the *Greeks*, he shall return to *Olympus* shamefully wounded; or I will throw him, seized by me, into dark hell, very far off, where the most deep abyss is under the earth; where there are iron gates, and a brazen threshold, as far within hell, as heaven is distant from the earth. He will then know, by how much I am the most powerful of all the gods.

"‘ But come, try, O ye gods, that ye may all see. Hang down the golden chain from heaven, hang upon it all ye gods, and all ye goddesses; but ye shall not be able to draw from heaven to the ground Jupiter the great counsellor, though ye strive ever so much. But when I afterwards shall be willing to draw, I shall lift both the earth itself, and the sea itself. Then I shall bind the chain round the top of *Olympus*, and they shall all hang aloft. For so much am I above gods and above men.’

“ With this most masterly passage of the greatest master of the sublime, of all antiquity, the writer, who probably had the greatest natural and acquired advantages of any mortal for perfecting a genius; let the following verbal translation of a passage from writings penned by one brought up a shepherd, and in a country where learning was not thought of, be compared; that the difference may appear. In this comparison, I know of no unfair advantage given the inspired writer. For both fragments are literally translated; and if the critics are right, the *Hebrew* original is verse, as well as the *Greek*.

“ ‘ O Lord, my God, thou art very great! Thou art clothed with honour and majesty! Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a canopy. Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind. Who maketh his angels spirits: his ministers a flame of fire. Who laid the foundation of the earth, that it should not be moved for ever. Thou coveredst it with the deep, as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place thou hast founded for them. Thou hast set a bound, that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.

“ ‘ O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all. The earth is full of thy riches. So is the great and wide sea, wherein are creatures, innumerable, both small and great. There go the ships. There is that leviathan, which thou hast made to play therein. These all wait upon thee, that thou mayest give them their food in due season. That thou givest them they gather. Thou openest thy hand: they are filled with good. Thou hidest thy face: they are troubled. They die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit: they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth. The glory of the Lord shall endure forever. The Lord shall rejoice in his works. He looketh on the earth and it trembleth. He toucheth the hills; and they smoke. I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live. I will sing praise unto my God, while I have my being.’

“ I appeal to every reader, whether the former of these two fragments is not, when compared with the latter, a school-boy’s theme, a capucinade, or a Grubstreet ballad, rather than a production fit to be named with any part of the inspired writings. Nor is it only in one instance, that the superiority of the scripture style to all human compositions appear. But taking the whole body of sacred poesy, and the whole of profane, and considering the character of the *Jehovah* of the former, and the *Jupiter* of the latter, every one must see the difference to be out of all reach of comparison. And, what is wonder-

fully remarkable, Scripture poesy, though penned by a number of different hands, as *Moses*, *David*, *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and the rest, in very distant ages, gives a distinct and uniform idea of the Supreme Being, no where deviating into any thing mean, or unworthy of him; and still even where he is spoken of in a manner suited to the general apprehension of mankind, his dignity and majesty are duly kept up. Whereas, there is not one of the ancient Heathen poets, who gives a consistent idea of the Supreme God, or keeps up his character throughout. *Homer*, in the same poem, describes his *Jupiter* with a great deal of majesty, and in another represents him as deceived by his wife *Juno*, and overcome with lust and sleep, while the inferior deities are playing what tricks they please, contrary to his intention. In short, the Supreme God is by *Homer* described as a bully; by *Virgil*, as a tyrant; by *Ovid*, as a beastly voluptuary; and by *Lucretius*, as a lazy drone. So that, if the cavils of the opposers of Revelation, with respect to the style of Scripture, were of much more consequence than they are; it would still be the easiest, and indeed the only rational way of accounting for the amazing superiority of those writings to the greatest human productions, in spite of the disadvantages of want of learning, and the like, which the sacred penmen laboured under; to ascribe the sentiments in them to Divine Inspiration."—*Burgh's Dignity of Human Nature, book iv. sec. i.*

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## LECTURE V.

*What do the Scriptures principally teach?*

WE now proceed to discuss the third answer of our catechism. It is stated thus—"The scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man."

You ought to be distinctly apprized, my young friends, that our Shorter Catechism was intended to contain only a compendious and connected system of revealed truth—That is, it was not intended either to go into long explanations, or to take in all the subordinate parts of the system, but only those things which are of leading importance. Neither was it intended to consider any point of what has been called *natural religion*, in any other view than as it is found in the Bible. Hence, after having explained what is the chief end or design of man, and recognised the holy scriptures as the only rule of direction in religious duty, the answer before us

makes *a distribution*, or lays down *the method*, of the following treatise. The distribution or method is very short and summary, and yet very expressive and complete. It is—I. What we are to believe. II. What we are to do.—Or, in other words, *faith and practice*; or, *doctrines and duties*.

As the answer before us was intended to specify the plan or method of the following part of the catechism, and as this has just been stated, it would seem that we ought to proceed immediately to the next question. But I remark, that as the authors of the catechism intended it to be as compendious as possible, so they appear to have designed that their very *arrangement* should have a significant import; and on considering it, I find that some points of much importance, especially to young persons, must be introduced here, or not find so suitable a place, in any other part of our course. I shall proceed, therefore, to notice these points; and shall show, as I proceed, how they arise out of this answer.

My first remark shall be on the word *principally*.—“The scriptures principally teach” certain truths, or doctrines. It is here intimated that the sacred writings teach some things beside what we are to believe in regard to God, and what we are to consider as our duty to him. The Bible contains a good deal of biography, and history, and many genealogies; and all that it contains is unmixed verity, and none of it is without its use. But the word we consider intimates, and the fact is unquestionably so, that some parts of the scripture are much more important than others. The most *important*, that is, the *principal* parts, are those which teach us *faith* and *practice*. If men were uninformed in regard to some of the other parts of scripture, they might still understand the revealed plan of salvation: and when real Christians differ, as they often do, about other things, the difference is about the unessentials of religion. But *faith and practice*—what we are to believe, and what we are to do—constitute the very substance, the *principal part* of true religion, or of divine revelation. Correctness here, at least to a certain extent, is essential to salvation.

This leads me to another remark of importance. The answer under consideration, you may observe, places what we are to believe, *before* what we are to do. This was not without design. It was intended to intimate, that if our practice be not the result of right principles and right motives, it is nothing worth in the sight of God. This is a most interesting truth, and a great part of all the false religion in the world springs from not regarding it. Recollect, I beseech you, my young friends, that in religion we have to do with the all seeing and heart searching God. Nothing is right in his sight, no outward action is acceptable, unless it proceed from a good and proper motive. Nor is this, in any respect, a rigorous procedure. You will find, if you examine attentively, that you act upon the same principle yourselves, so far as your knowledge will permit you to do it. How often has it happened that a man has acquired esteem for his civility, perhaps for real kindheartedness and benevolence, because he has appeared to take a very friendly interest in every thing that related to the character or accommodation of those with whom he had intercourse: And yet it has afterwards been discovered, that this man was unquestionably one of the most selfish of his race; that in all his apparent benevolence he was only seeking to serve himself; that it was in pursuit of this object that all his courtesy and seeming kindness was manifested; and that he had really dishonoured and injured those to whom his plausible behaviour had so strongly recommended him. Do you not estimate this man's character entirely by his motives, and not by his visible conduct? Do you not detest him for having acted so fairly, when his motives were so base—even more than you would have done if he had, without disguise, appeared the selfish being that he really was? Think, then, that the motives of every human action are, at the time it takes place, perfectly known to God; and acknowledge that his proceeding is most equitable, in making *motive*, and not *action*, the test by which he will try and treat us. It is from some selfish motive, and not from any love, or any regard to God whatever, that a large

part of mankind show all the respect which they do show, to his laws and commandments. "God is not in all their thoughts." The Deity, therefore, would practically deny his own omniscience, or violate his own justice and equity, if he accepted the outward acts of such men, as a part of the service which he requires. This he will never do; and hence the just complaint made against his ancient professing people, which was quoted by our Saviour when he charged the scribes and Pharisees with hypocrisy—"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

We see, then, that right inward principles and motives are, and must be, indispensable to the acceptable service of God. Now, a right faith is among these inward principles. It is necessary to the views and motives by which we must be guided and influenced, and to the acts which we must put forth, in doing that which is well pleasing to our Maker. We cannot indeed make the first approach to God, without some measure of a right faith. "For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Our Saviour, in the days of his flesh, declared to those whom he addressed, that there was a point of faith which was essential to their salvation—"If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

It is a great error to suppose and represent, as some appear to do, that faith is required by a mere arbitrary act of God; without our being able to discern how believing will make us the better, or disbelieving make us the worse. No verily—Faith is always required on account of the benefits which accompany, or the use that is to be made of it. Suppose you were ill of a mortal disease, and that there was one, and but one, remedy in the world, which would preserve your life. Suppose you had heard of this remedy, but from utterly discrediting its efficacy, you absolutely refused to take it. You would die, and your death would be justly attributed to your want of faith in the remedy. The faith was essentially necessary to that act which would have saved your life—necessary

from the very nature of the case. It is exactly the same in the gospel system of salvation. The whole human race are infected with a moral malady, which, if left to itself, will inevitably prove fatal. There is one, and but one, remedy in the world, which will certainly save the soul. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.” By faith the soul is rested on Christ alone for salvation. Without this faith, it is impossible that the act by which we are to be saved can be performed; and as there “is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved,” but the name of Christ alone,—if he be discredited and rejected, we perish of course. You perceive, then, that faith is not a mere speculative, inoperative crediting of a fact; but that it is required and is essential, on account of the use that is to be made of it—the influence that it is to have *practically* on its possessor. Men may quarrel if they will with this appointment of their Creator; but it is utterly false to say that faith produces no practical effect, which may not be produced on those who want it. He who has faith—I repeat—rests for salvation on the only and the all sufficient Saviour: he who has not faith, must rest on some false foundation, which will certainly be swept away in the hour of his utmost necessity.

The connexion between truth and duty is made the subject of a section, in a summary given of the fundamental principles of our church, in the introduction to the Form of Government. It stands thus: “Truth is in order to goodness; and the great touchstone of truth, is its tendency to promote holiness; according to our Saviour’s rule, ‘By their fruits ye shall know them.’ And no opinion can be either more pernicious, or more absurd, than that which brings truth and falsehood upon a level, and represents it as of no consequence what a man’s opinions are. On the contrary, we are persuaded, that there is an inseparable connexion between faith and practice, truth and duty. Otherwise it would be of no consequence either to discover truth, or to embrace it.”

This section was intended directly to counteract a loose

and dangerous notion, which is very prevalent in the world, and is recommended by the guise of liberality, or enlarged charity, which it assumes, and of which it always boasts. The notion to which I refer is commonly expressed in these words—"It is no matter what a man believes, if his life be right." Mr. Pope, who was infinitely a better poet than a divine or casuist, and who is known to have borrowed the leading principles of his moral system from the infidel Bolingbroke, has lent his sanction to this absurd and pernicious notion—He says

"For modes of faith let graceless bigots fight,  
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

It is highly probable that the sentiment I combat has derived not a little of its currency from this very couplet. Let us then examine it carefully. For "graceless bigots," who "fight" for religion, we make no apology. Let them receive all the reprehension and all the ridicule, with which any one may be disposed to treat them. Fighting for religion, either with military arms, or with words dictated by angry and malevolent passions, is contrary to the whole scope and spirit of the gospel. "The weapons of this warfare are not carnal," but spiritual; although they are "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" of error. But is it true, that "a man's faith cannot be wrong, if his life is in the right?" Let us try to ascertain clearly, if we can, what is meant by this assertion. In a certain sense a man's *life* comprises all his thoughts, words and actions; and of course, if these be *all* right, his faith will be right. But Mr. Pope certainly did not mean to express such a bald truism as this. He doubtless meant to express precisely the notion already stated in other words—"that if a man's external conduct be right, it is no matter what is his faith, or what he believes." Now, in regard to this I remark, that a supposition is here made of what does not take place in fact, except partially in a few rare instances, and these of such a character as to be unworthy of approbation or imitation: and therefore I deny the

truth and justice of the proposition altogether, and maintain that it promulgates a most dangerous practical error. It is calculated, and was really intended to teach, that a man may lead a good life, let his faith be what it may; and consequently that belief, or inward principle, is of little or no account—having no necessary or natural connexion with right conduct. It has already been shown, and I hope satisfactorily, that the heart searching God judges of our character entirely by what is within us—Outward conduct is nothing in his sight, further than as it is the fair expression of the temper of our hearts, and the nature of our motives; and consequently if these be wrong, our final judge will condemn us, be our visible practice what it may. But I ask, can our principles and motives be all wrong, and yet the outward conduct be right? We indeed readily and gladly make the admission, that from the influence of early education in establishing right feelings, or from not seeing the legitimate tendency of their own principles, or from the predominancy of common sense and the strong perception of moral obligation, men sometimes act much better than we should expect them to do, from the sentiments which they avow. In every such case we are wont to say, and with great propriety, that the man's heart is better than his head. Even here however, you observe, the *heart* is supposed to be right—the intellect only is perverted. But is such a man to be held up as an example, or as exhibiting the general effect of inward principle on outward conduct? No assuredly. He acts rightly only because he acts inconsistently. And there is always danger that he will discover his inconsistency; and on doing so, that he will change his good conduct, rather than his bad reasoning.

I confess I hardly know how to reason with a man, who would maintain that my faith and opinions have not a natural and almost necessary influence on my outward conduct. Such an influence they must have, if I do not play the hypocrite, or act irrationally. An honest, reasonable, and consistent man, always acts agreeably to the principles which he has imbibed, and the opinions which he maintains. It is this

which gives him the character he sustains. To act otherwise, is ever considered as proceeding from weakness, from cowardice, or from dissimulation. I know of no dictate of common sense, or any self evident truth, more clear, than that a rational being, so far as he acts rationally and honestly, must act agreeably to what he believes to be right: which is only saying, in other words, that his faith must have a natural influence on his practice.

Those who deny the connexion between truth and duty, faith and practice, must surely set some bounds to their system. If not, what, I ask, is the use, in any case, of endeavouring to discover moral truth? If truth and falsehood are exactly on a footing, as to a good influence on the mind and on practice, there is surely little reason to be inquisitive or zealous in regard to truth. Yet these very men are earnest contenders for what they affirm to be truth. But further—will they maintain that a man may be an atheist, be free from all fear of a judgment to come, believe that there is no such thing as moral obligation, and that he is the wisest man who takes the largest share of present sensual gratification; and yet be as good a man, and as good a member of society, as a truly pious Christian? Is not the whole experience of the world arrayed against such doctrine? Does not that experience demonstrate, that so far as the atheistical and other corrupt sentiments I have mentioned are known to be embraced by an individual, they render him, in general estimation, a moral monster; and that so far as they prevail in a community, they are destructive of all order, peace, safety, and happiness, in society—overturning it from its very foundations? And yet to all this length will the system I oppose go, if carried to its full extent. It is therefore false and pernicious, and that in the highest degree.

Having now shown that there is an indissoluble connexion between truth and duty, faith and practice, inward principle and outward conduct, I think it proper and important to observe, that it belongs not to us to determine the *exact degree* of erroneous faith, which may consist with holding what is

essential to salvation. This is known only to God. And here we find the proper and ample ground of true Christian charity; so far as it has a bearing on this subject. We may believe that an individual is in many respects erroneous, and yet hope that he holds all essential truth—That, although, agreeably to the scripture representation, he has been building with much “wood, hay, and stubble,” which will be burned, and he suffer loss; still he may be saved, “yet so as by fire.”

Be reminded, however, and remember it carefully, that when you make allowance for the errors of others, this is not to admit that they are not *errors*. Think not that these errors will consist with innocence, or even with safety, in yourselves. They may not be incompatible with salvation in another, and yet they may be so in you. Your light and information may give you a responsibility which others have not; and no error is too small to be avoided. Never yield to the idle talk, which you will probably often hear, “that all religions are equally good.” Alas! the world abounds with religions which are ruinously bad. You may believe, too, that salvation may be *possible* in a particular religion, without allowing it to be as good, or half as good, as another; just as I may admit that a certain vehicle may *possibly* carry an individual to the place of his destination in safety, without admitting that this vehicle is at all to be compared with another—Another may be safer, easier, swifter, and in all respects incomparably better.

My dear youth—it is a prevalent and lamentable evil of this age and place, that a large proportion of the people have no consistent or digested system of religious sentiments and principles. They have picked up one opinion here, and another there: these opinions they have never closely examined; they have never compared them carefully with the scriptures, the standard of truth: they live along—uncomfortably enough—and they often die more uncomfortably than they have lived. A principal object which I have in view in this course of lectures is, to endeavour to ground you fully and

correctly in the very faith of the gospel—"the faith which was once delivered to the saints"—that you may have the advantage and the comfort of it, both in life and in death.

You are, however, by no means to suppose, that in any thing you have heard at this time, it has been my design, to deny or undervalue the *practical part* of religion, or the performance of *Christian duties*. No verily—I have only aimed to lay a solid foundation for practical duty. There is an error here, I admit, which is quite as bad as that which I have exposed. There is a description of people who value themselves on their correct, systematick knowledge of religion, who, notwithstanding, never practise religion. It would seem as if they supposed that a correct creed would save their souls: whereas, the fact is, that if "they hold the truth in unrighteousness"—if "they know their Lord's will, and do it not,—they will be beaten with many stripes:"—They will perish with a more aggravated condemnation than the ignorant or deluded. Hence it has sometimes been said, that a bad life is the worst heresy: and if such a life be persisted in to the last, by those who have been taught the truth as it is in Jesus, their doom will no doubt be peculiarly awful. This notwithstanding, it is of the utmost importance that the mind should be fixed in just principles of religion, even before practical piety takes place;—because, as already shown, just principles naturally lead to a right practice. Corrupt principles lay the conscience to sleep. He who holds them is wrong upon system, and you cannot disturb him until you have broken up his "refuge of lies." But he who transgresses practically, while his principles are sound, must contend with conscience. You can address him with arguments and admonitions drawn from what he admits to be right—And even without this, his own reflections, especially in those hours of seriousness which occur in the lives of all, will have a constant tendency to work his reformation. Hence we see, in fact, that those who have been early and well indoctrinated in religion, do so often become practically pious;—sometimes even in those mournful instances, in which, for a season, they

have broken restraining bonds asunder, and been dissolute and profane. The Spirit of all grace, operating on an enlightened understanding and the remaining sensibility of natural conscience, brings them to serious consideration, to deep repentance, to an earnest application to the atoning blood of the Redeemer, and to a new and holy life. Of such momentous importance is it, that the mind have clear and consistent views of revealed truth, and be rooted and grounded in it.

From what you have now heard on this answer in the catechism, I shall make, in concluding the lecture, a few inferences of a practical kind.

1. You may perceive, from what has been said, that holding fast the truth as it is in Jesus, and even contending earnestly for it, is not inconsistent with genuine Christian charity. This, indeed, we know at once must be the fact; because as firmness in the faith, and Christian charity, are both duties, and every duty must be consistent with every other, the two duties in question can never be discordant. But we here perceive *how* the agreement takes place, and what is the ground of it. There are certain things, both in faith and practice, which are *essential* to religion. For those who understandingly deny and reject these things, we are not bound to exercise charity—if by charity we understand the regarding of such persons as being in a state of safety and salvation. We are, indeed, to cherish toward them the most kind and benevolent feelings, and to seek to do them all the good in our power, and especially to bring them to the knowledge of the truth, that they may be saved. But we must either renounce our adherence to the fundamentals of religion ourselves, or regard them as in a state not only dangerous but ruinous. We cannot do the former, and must therefore, however reluctantly, do the latter. Yet genuine charity will make all due allowance for the prejudices of education, for the want of correct information, and for numerous other causes, which produce error, confusion and indistinctness, in relation to some important doctrines of religion. Charity will also lead us to hope, when the essentials of religion are not openly and

avowedly rejected, that they may be held, (though it be with a mixture of much error,) in such manner as to consist with a measure of vital piety: And real fervent charity will always incline its possessor to embrace, in cordial Christian affection, all who appear to love the Saviour in sincerity, by whatever name they may be called, or to whatever sect, or church, or denomination of Christians they may belong. I have never read of an uninspired man who appeared to me to have a more diffusive genuine charity than Dr. John Owen; and yet I know of none who has more zealously, laboriously, and successfully, contended for all the important doctrines of the Bible.

2. You may perceive, from what you have heard on the answer in the catechism discussed at this time, that there are some parts of the scriptures which should be read more frequently, and more studiously than others. This follows from the distinction made between what the scriptures *principally* teach, and what they teach incidentally and subordinately. It is, however, by no means the design of this remark, to recommend the omission of any part of the sacred volume. On the contrary, I would earnestly recommend, as a matter of great importance, that the Bible be read throughout, and in regular order—and that frequently. If there be any young person now hearing me, who has reached fifteen years of age, without having read the Bible carefully through, I would say that such an individual, male or female, has neglected an important duty—an important duty which he or she ought immediately to begin to perform.

There is a great advantage in knowing what is contained in every part of this holy book;—for almost every part has some connexion with another part. It is, however, perfectly consistent with this to say, that some parts should be perused much oftener than others. The whole of the New Testament should, I think, be read more frequently and studiously than the Old; and the devotional, didactic, and historical parts of the whole Bible, more frequently than the rest. The book of Psalms, and the book of Proverbs, should be very fa-

miliar. The prophecies of Isaiah and Daniel, are more plain than the most of the others. What relates to the Mosaick ritual, though certainly not to be neglected, will not claim as frequent a perusal as the other parts of scripture. I recommend an abundant reading of the sacred text, without note or comment. Yet commentators are useful, and their labours ought not to be undervalued. The prophecies, and some other portions of scripture, cannot be understood fully, without their aid;—and their practical remarks are often highly excellent. For popular reading, the commentaries of Henry, Scott, Guise, Doddridge, Burkitt, and Horne, are, in my opinion, the best in our language.

3. You may learn from the statement you have heard, to guard against the evil of separating, in religion, what God hath joined together. This is an evil of very extensive, and very pernicious influence. I have shown you that truth is in order to goodness;—and that truth and duty cannot be separated. In the same manner, it is impossible to separate faith and good works; genuine morality and true religion; or the use of means and the blessing that comes from God alone. The attempt is often made to separate these things in practice, but a real separation is utterly impracticable. They are indissolubly united by the Divine appointment. Never therefore, attempt to disunite them. Let it be your object to avoid error, not only that your speculations may be correct, but that knowing the truth, you may reduce it to practice. Let a lively faith in Christ, as the ground of your justification, be evinced to be sincere, by every good word and work that can adorn religion, honour God, or do good to mankind. Never imagine that there can be any religion that will save the soul, without good morals; nor that good morals without unfeigned piety will render you a whit safer. Use all the means of God's appointment diligently and faithfully, and yet look to him, and depend on him, at every step, for his grace and blessing to render them effectual. Here is the true gospel system; and every thing contrary to it, is unquestionably erroneous and delusive.

4. Finally—From the whole that you have heard on this subject, let me earnestly inculcate the importance of practical piety. After all that can be said, or taught, there is no *full security* against running into the most ruinous errors, except in real, experimental, heart religion. The human heart is depraved throughout, in its natural state; it is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” It is therefore in natural alliance with all those principles which will admit of sinful indulgence; and is hostile to those which forbid that indulgence: And one error in principle and practice, may lead on to another, till every extreme of impiety is reached. But when the heart is renewed and sanctified, this dreadful bias of corrupt nature is corrected and changed. The love of holiness is implanted, which is always connected with a supreme love of truth and duty. And above all, the soul is committed, for its safe keeping, to Him who will assuredly “keep that which is committed to him.” Here, then, is the only *absolute* protection against those errors that destroy the soul. Seek, therefore, with the utmost engagedness, the renewing grace of God; and give yourselves no contentment, till you have obtained this “pearl of great price.”

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## LECTURE VI.

### *What is God?*

THE fourth answer of our catechism is thus expressed—“God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.”

We have seen that our catechism was intended to be merely a summary of revealed truth, and no farther to notice subjects of natural religion than as they are referred to in sacred scripture. Had not their plan been thus limited, the authors of the catechism would no doubt have made the subject of the

answer before us the first in the system; since the being and perfections of God must manifestly lie at the foundation of all religion. But as a revelation from God necessarily implies his existence, so that existence is taken for granted, not only in this catechism but in the scriptures themselves. There is no elaborate argument in the Bible to prove the being of a God, although we there find a reference incidentally to the very best evidence by which his existence is evinced; and it is from revelation alone that we obtain a correct and just knowledge of the divine perfections. It is an undeniable fact, that although the belief of a great first cause has been nearly universal in the world, through all ages, yet without revelation, men have never had consistent and adequate conceptions of the divine character. A few of the heathen philosophers did, indeed, form and express some noble and just notions of the Supreme Being; yet in other particulars they were, in regard to the Deity, grossly ignorant or erroneous: and whatever was their knowledge, it was pretty much confined to themselves and to a few disciples—"The *world* by wisdom knew not God."

But notwithstanding the catechism is silent on this subject, I have thought it right to give you a short and summary view of the evidence or proof of the being of God, as it is stated in the systems of natural religion. In doing this some of the divine attributes will of course be mentioned; but we shall not dwell upon them, till we come to consider them as made known by revelation, as well as by reason.

The proof of the being of God rests ultimately on this principle, that *there can be no effect without a cause*. That every effect must have an adequate cause, must be taken as an axiom; that is, a principle so obvious that it does not admit of proof. Without axioms, or self-evident principles, we can never reason conclusively at all; because all sound reasoning must begin, or terminate, in what is self-evident. Mr. Hume, who seemed to delight in trying to make the human understanding confound or subvert itself, has endeavoured to weaken our belief in the connexion between cause and ef-

fect;\* but his sophistry has been exposed and confuted, in the most satisfactory manner.

It is usual to state two methods of proving the being of a God from reason; both of which however, rest equally on the principle that every effect must have an adequate cause. The first of these trains of reasoning is called the method *a priori*; the second the method *a posteriori*.

The method *a priori* is a process of reasoning from yourself to your Creator. By consciousness you establish your own existence. That existence must have a cause. Where do you find it? Did you create yourself? Nothing can be more absurd than self-creation—it implies action before the existence of that which acts. You derived your being from others. Your parents must say the same: and carry it on as many generations as you choose, the last must say the same as the first. In this process you must at length arrive at a

\* The late Dr. THOMAS BROWN, of Edinburgh, in his "Inquiry into the Relation of Cause and Effect," maintains with Mr. Hume, that what we denominate *causes and effects*, are only series of *antecedents* and *sequences*, having no other connexion than that the former have always been followed by the latter. He is however so far from agreeing with Mr. Hume in the sceptical and infidel consequences derived from this doctrine, that he most completely subverts the whole sceptical system, and even exposes it to ridicule, on the very principles from which Mr. Hume derived it. We mean not, however, to express our belief in Dr. Brown's philosophical theory. We very seriously doubt whether it will stand the test of a full and fair examination, when time shall have been afforded to scrutinize it thoroughly, to observe its consequences, and to weigh the objections of its opposers.

Dr. Beattie's method of disposing of Mr. Hume's sophistry seems to be entirely satisfactory. It may be seen in his own language, at the beginning of the 5th section of his "Essay on Truth." We shall make use of his leading ideas, and accommodate them to our purpose thus—I leave my study for an hour, and on my return I find on my table a book, which I know was not there when I went out, and of which I had never heard before. I make every possible investigation and inquiry, with a view to discover how the book came to be where I found it. All is fruitless—I had locked the door and taken the key with me, and a faithful servant assures me that he has had his eye on my study door the whole time of my absence. The chimney, and windows, and walls, have been examined, and it is manifest that no one has entered or departed by them. The whole affair is mysterious and unaccountable, and I am left in utter perplexity.—Now does it ever occur to me that the book came to be in the place where I found it *without any cause*? Suppose this to be suggested, can I, by any possible effort of my mind, believe it? No assuredly.—The belief that every effect has an adequate cause is an intuitive or self-evident truth, which in every sane mind, is invincible. It is always taken for granted—We believe that infidelity itself never thought that the sacred writer needed to prove any premises when he said—"every house is builded by some man"—but this is in no respect clearer than what immediately follows, and yet has often been denied—"he that built all things is God."

great first cause of all, which we call God: for an eternal succession of dependent causes will be found an absurdity—It is only an attempt to remove the first cause out of sight. Suppose—to use the illustration of a celebrated writer—suppose a chain was seen hanging from the heavens, and extending upward beyond your sight. Would it be satisfactory to say that the first link of this chain hung on the second, the second on the third, and so on *ad infinitum*? Would you not ask what holds up the whole? A chain of ten links would require a certain power to uphold it, a chain of twenty links double that power, and an infinite chain an infinite power. In a word, if the parts taken separately cannot support themselves, the whole, which is only the parts taken collectively, cannot support itself. And the longer you make the chain, the greater must be the power by which it is upheld—an infinite chain will require infinite power—a power not in the chain, but out of it. It is exactly the same with the several generations, or, if you will, links of the human race. They must be traced to a great first cause *out of themselves*, on which they all depend—That cause is God: He must be considered as self-existent, and perfect, or infinite, in all his attributes. “That”—says Dr. Doddridge—“is said to be a self-existent or necessarily existent being, which does not owe its existence to any other being whatsoever, either as its cause or its support; but would exist and be what it is, were there no other being in the whole compass of nature but itself.”

It seems proper that I should briefly mention here, that there have been some speculative men in every age, and that among these we are to reckon (if I understand their system) the most, if not all, of the professed atheists that have appeared in our own day, who have maintained that *the universe, as we now find it, is eternal*; and that we ought not to believe that there is any such being as is usually called God. In regard to this system of atheism let it be remarked and remembered, that in much the same way in which it has been shown that a chain of infinite links cannot support itself, it may be conclusively shown that any thing else made up of

parts, dependent on each other, and in their nature mutable and imperfect, cannot be eternal. But the universe is unquestionably made up of parts, all of which are dependent, mutable and imperfect, and therefore it cannot be eternal.—Let it farther be remarked, that the *indirect* method of proof, or that which is called *reductio ad absurdum*, is held, even in mathematical demonstrations, to be as conclusive and satisfactory as *direct* proof. Now it is apparent, that every supposition of the origin and existence of the universe may be reduced to a perfect *absurdity*, that alone excepted which represents it as the production of a self-existent perfect being—infinite in all his attributes. The belief therefore of such a being—such a first cause of all other beings—is *demonstrably* rational and incumbent on us —For, we repeat, other beings must have a cause of existence out of themselves, and here *alone* we find it. We readily admit that the eternity, and self-existence, and perfections of God, entirely exceed the grasp of the human mind. But there is no *absurdity* in believing the *existence* of what we cannot fully comprehend ;—we do it continually, and must do it, in a thousand instances. On the whole then, by believing that the universe is the work of an infinitely perfect Being, we have a rational account of its existence; while every other account is completely irrational and absurd.

In what has last been said I have considerably anticipated the second method of proving the existence of God, which is denominated *a posteriori*. This is properly and professedly a philosophical induction from the visible universe. You look around you, and on every hand you see the undeniable proofs of Almighty power, infinite wisdom, and unspeakable goodness. You ask for the author and origin of these. You are unable to find them in the things themselves—all say they are not in us. You must therefore, and you do, refer them to an infinitely powerful, wise and good first cause—and this cause is God.

There seems not to be any real ground of distinction between these two methods of proof, except it be that the

former is more abstract, and the latter more plain and popular. Yet the distinction has long been made, and till of late generally considered as just; and I therefore thought it proper to state both methods, and to show how, in each, the reasoning process is carried on. But if you examine the subject closely you will perceive, not only that both depend, as already intimated, on a common principle or axiom, but that both also begin and proceed in the same train. The first, indeed, sets out with establishing our own existence from consciousness, and the second by establishing the existence of the material world by the external senses. But both reason immediately *from the creature to the Creator*.

Of these two methods of proof, or two ways rather of adducing the proof of the being of a God, I decisively prefer the latter, and recommend that you always adopt it, in thinking and reasoning on this subject. It is really accompanied with no difficulty or obscurity whatever. We can scarcely open our eyes on the material world, without being struck at once, with the ineffable wisdom, power and benignity, which are every where apparent in the works of creation and Providence; and of perceiving that they point us to the Great Creator as the source from which they all proceed. Accordingly we find, that to these objects the sacred scriptures direct our attention, and represent the visible universe as proclaiming a God, in language which the whole human race may understand. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” Truly, my young friends, wherever we turn our eyes, whether to the heavens, to the earth, or to ourselves, we see so many striking proofs of the existence and perfections of God, that we may well wonder that the human being should ever have existed who denied his Maker’s existence. Some, indeed, have questioned whether there ever was really and truly a speculative Atheist—I say a *specula-*

tive atheist, because there can be no question that the number is great indeed of those who “live without God in the world;” who, with the fool mentioned by the Psalmist, “say in their heart, there is no God,” that is, who wish there were none; and live with as little regard to his laws and his displeasure, as if they deliberately disbelieved his existence. But these *practical* atheists, seldom reason or think on this subject at all; and indeed are commonly among the most thoughtless of men, in regard to all moral subjects. Yet there have been a few in almost every age, and perhaps in none more than in our own, especially in France, who have avowed themselves atheists upon conviction. We are even told of two or three instances in which men have died martyrs to atheism. Still it has been seriously doubted whether, among them all, there has been any real conviction of the understanding in favour of atheism; or any thing more than the love of singularity, a desire to set aside moral obligation, or a proud obstinacy in defending and abiding by opinions, taken up without examination and hastily promulgated. But when we read in scripture of some who “are given over to strong delusions to believe a lie,” it will not appear incredible, that there may be some speculative atheists; and that they will quite as probably be found among men of science, who have grossly abused the advantages of intellect and knowledge with which God had favoured them, as among any other class of men. Still it is true, that such men are always, and justly, considered as moral monsters; and really seem as if they were affected by that species of insanity which completely perverts intellect in regard to one particular subject, while the powers of the mind remain unimpaired, perhaps uncommonly vigorous, in regard to almost every thing beside.

On this part of our subject I shall only further remark, that it has often been mentioned as an evidence of the being of God, that all nations in all parts of the world have been impressed with the belief of some great first cause of all things; and that our Larger Catechism teaches, that “the very light of nature in man, and the works of God, declare plainly that

there is a God." Mr. Locke, however, in combating the doctrine of innate ideas, contends pretty strenuously, but to my apprehension not successfully, that we have sufficient reason to believe that there have been some portions of the human family, among which no impression, or conception whatever, of a Supreme Being was to be found. But granting the fact to be exactly as he states it, still it is to be observed that he admits these people to have been among the most ignorant and debased of human beings; and certainly they were a very inconsiderable portion of our species. Now it is not easy to say how far the mental powers may be oppressed and obstructed in their natural operations, by ignorance and privation—Probably it may be to such a degree that man, while he continues in this unusually degraded state, may not be able to develope powers which he really possesses, but remain, as it were, in a state of perpetual infancy. On the whole, there seems to be no rational way of accounting for the universal belief of a Supreme Being, or great first cause of all things, but by saying that it is either an instinctive principle of our nature, or that it is so easily derived from the visible universe that all acquire it; or else that it has been produced by an early tradition, which has been as extensive as our race.

We come now to speak of the attributes of God; by which we understand those perfections of his nature by which he manifests himself to his intelligent creatures, and by which he is distinguished from them. We are not to conceive of these attributes, or perfections, as really separable from each other, or from the Deity himself. They are distinguished from each other, only as to their objects, their effects, and the method of our conceiving of them: and although essence and attributes are distinguishable, yet we can know nothing of the Deity but by his attributes.

The Divine perfections have been divided, or classed, in a variety of ways, which I shall not even specify. Indeed some of these divisions appear to me not only useless, but rather improper. There are two methods of classification however, which I think it may be useful to mention, and very briefly

explain—The first is the division of the perfections of God into *natural* and *moral*—the second, into *communicable* and *incommunicable*.

The *natural* attributes of the Deity are *spirituality, immensity, wisdom, and power*. They are called *natural*, because they do not necessarily, or in themselves, imply any moral quality. It would indeed be impious to suppose that these attributes could possibly exist in the Supreme Being, unconnected with others which are moral. Yet in these, taken separately, the moral character of any being does not consist: and in inferior beings we often see great intellectual energy without correspondent goodness, and high moral excellence, without an equal degree of powerful intellect.

The *moral* attributes of the Deity are *holiness, justice, goodness and truth*.

The *communicable* attributes of God are *being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth*. They are called *communicable*, because some resemblance of them is found among the creatures, especially in angels and men. Yet in the creatures, when compared with the Creator, they are but as twinkling rays in comparison with the sun.

Of *incommunicable* attributes, some divines reckon five. *Independence or self-existence, simplicity or unity of essence, immutability, eternity and immensity*. Others reckon only three—*infinity, eternity and unchangeableness*. This difference is scarcely more than nominal; as those who specify the latter number, include some of the former in those which they mention. These are called *incommunicable* attributes, because no resemblance of them whatever is found among creatures; nor does it belong to the nature of a creature to possess any one of them. They belong, and can belong, only to God, the infinite fountain of all being and excellence.

But although I have noticed these distinctions between the natural and moral, and between the communicable and incommunicable attributes of the Deity, because they seem to be well founded, and serve to give us just conceptions of the Su-

preme Being, and must occasionally be called into view, yet it is not my purpose to prosecute the discussion with any direct reference to these classifications. If you look at the answer in the catechism which we are now considering, you will perceive that it enumerates all the divine attributes that have been named, only in somewhat of a different order. I shall therefore, in the remainder of the discussion, follow the enumeration and the order which the answer exhibits. On some of the divine perfections I shall dilate more than upon others; but on all I must be short and summary—Each of them is more than sufficient to furnish the subject of a long discourse.

The answer before us begins with stating that “God is a spirit.” There have been some who have denied that we can form any distinct and rational idea of a spirit; and some young persons, I know, have been sadly perplexed and bewildered, from not understanding how to conduct their thoughts and inquiries in regard to this subject. I will therefore endeavour very briefly to explain it; making use of the general reasoning of Mr. Locke, without adopting his method or using his language.

You will observe and remember then, that we form our idea of *spirit*, in the very same manner in which we form our idea of *matter*. We know nothing of either, but by their properties or attributes; and by these we know as much of spirit as we do of matter. To illustrate this, I take a stone; and my senses inform me that it is *hard*, and *extended*, and *coloured*. But hardness, extension, and colour, are not matter, but merely, as the terms import, the properties or attributes of matter. Neither can you show me, nor tell me, what the *matter* of the stone is, separately from its properties or attributes—further than that there must be something—a *substratum* philosophers call it—to which all these belong. Of matter, then it is plain you know nothing besides its attributes, except that it exists. Now you may perceive at once, that you know exactly as much as this of spirit—and we admit that you can know no more. You are every whit

as certain that you *think, choose, and refuse*, as you are that the stone is hard, extended, and coloured. Thinking, choosing, and refusing, are not indeed spirit itself, but the acts or attributes of spirit. We grant too, that we cannot tell what spirit is, separately from these acts or attributes—further than that there must be something—an *immaterial substance* it is often called—to which all these belong. But of this immaterial substance, we affirm that we are not *more ignorant*, than of the material substance called matter. Our ignorance, and our knowledge of both, are exactly similar and equal. We can define neither matter nor spirit, except by their several attributes; and by these we can define and conceive of both equally well. If any body will tell me what matter is, exclusively of its being hard, extended and coloured, I will tell him what spirit is, exclusively of its thinking, choosing and refusing. If he cannot do the former, he ought not to require me to do the latter; and if he believes in the existence of matter, when it is known only by its attributes, he ought to believe in spirit which is known precisely in the same way. Yes, my young friends, we have as much knowledge of mind as we have of matter—we are no more ignorant of a *spiritual* than of a *material* substance. Spirit is that which thinks, which reasons, which judges, which deliberately approves or disapproves. These certainly are not among the *known* properties of matter, let materialists reason as they may; but they are the known and acknowledged properties of what we denominate mind or spirit.

Now, in regard to our Creator—in speaking of whom we ought ever to be filled with the profoundest reverence—when we say that he is a Spirit, we do not presume to say that his essence is of the same nature with that of our own minds, or even with that of angelick minds. It may be greatly different from that of any created spirit; as we know that he is in all respects infinitely superior to the highest orders of his creatures. Still we do say, and are warranted by his revelation to say, that “God is a spirit.” He is *infinitely intelligent*, as well as the source of all intelligence to every creature

possessing the powers of intellect—God is not matter but the purest of spirits.

You will observe that the answer under consideration, after teaching us that God is a Spirit, goes on to state, that both in his being and in all the attributes afterwards enumerated, he is *infinite, eternal* and *unchangeable*—these terms are to be connected with each of the words which follows them in the answer.

2. God is *infinite* in his *Being*. The infinitude of the being of God is often called his *omnipresence*, and sometimes his *immensity*, and it is closely connected with his *omniscience*. He is present in every part of his wide dominions; so that no point can be assumed or imagined in unlimited space, of which it can be said that God is not *there*. He is there in the strictest sense; there by his *essential presence*, as well as by his perfect knowledge of whatever else is there. This is inimitably described in the 139th Psalm—“Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me: yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.”

The Deity being thus every where present, not only surrounding and embracing, but most intimately *pervading* every created being, perfectly knows all things—His omniscience, as it relates to a knowledge of all that passes in the universe, is, as already intimated, closely connected with his immensity or ubiquity. No occurrence, no change, can possibly take place in creation unperceived by him. Nay, not only all visible events, but all the most secret thoughts and designs of his intelligent creatures, whether good or bad, the moment they are formed, are more perfectly known to him than to the creatures who form them. “The Lord searcheth

all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts—I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts."

The omnipresence or infinite being of God, is also connected with his providential care, preservation, and perfect control and government, of all the works of his hands. As they all exist in him, and are upheld by him, they cannot act but by his permission. He limits and bounds all their actions; he directs and orders all things according to his good pleasure; and "he openeth his hand and satisfieth the desires of every living thing."

The incomprehensibility of God by his creatures, follows necessarily from his infinity. He is fully known only to Himself. A finite being cannot comprehend that which is infinite. "Who by searching can find out God, who can find out the Almighty to perfection?—Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it." The most enlarged capacity of men or of angels, will never be able fully to understand the being or the perfections of God. Hence their capacities may be, and it seems probable to me that they will be, forever enlarging, and rendering them more noble, and such of them as are holy, more happy; and yet, although this be so, there will forever remain an infinite distance between them and their Creator.

3. God is *eternal*. He exists from eternity to eternity. There is an eternity which is past, and an eternity which is to come—an eternity before time began, and an eternity when time shall be no more. Time is measured by a constant succession of its parts or portions; and every moment as it passes is taken from the eternity to come, and added to the eternity which is passed. Suppose a line strictly infinite, that is, without beginning or end. This may represent the whole of eternity. Suppose a point taken in this line, and moved forward a very small distance, say an inch, and there terminated. This small distance on the infinite line, may represent time. The Divine existence is commensurate with the whole line. But all the events of time, from the formation to the dissolution of the universe, lie within the measured

inch: and as there is no proportion between this inch and the whole line, inasmuch as there can be no proportion between that which is finite and that which is infinite, so there is no proportion whatever between time and eternity. In the Divine existence, represented by the whole line, there is no succession or progression of parts; for the supposition is that it is complete at once, and without beginning or end. Hence it has been said with truth, that the existence of the Supreme Being is one eternal now. We conceive of Him as having existed an endless duration, before the point was assumed from which the inch of time begins. Through this whole duration he existed without creatures—perfectly happy in himself alone. Men and angels will exist through an endless duration, represented by the line which goes forward from the termination of the measured inch: that is, their future existence, awful thought! will be commensurate with the existence of God. But you will be careful to observe, that this eternal *future* existence of intelligent creatures is not a *necessary* existence, like that of the Creator—It depends entirely on his will and appointment. He could terminate it in a moment, if such were his pleasure; but it will continue eternally, because it is his unchanging determination that it shall so continue. But his existence, from- eternity to eternity, is from his very nature—It is a necessary indestructible existence.

Here, again, my dear youth, we have another view of the incomprehensible nature of God. I have endeavoured to give your thoughts a right direction for meditating on the subject, and to illustrate it a little. But eternal duration is a subject that soon swallows up all our thoughts. Sometimes when we speak of the distinctions or persons in the Godhead, we are told that we speak of what is *incomprehensible*. We admit it fully; but we remark that there is nothing which relates to the Deity that is not incomprehensible: and for myself, I know of nothing in theology that is more *mysterious*, nothing that more immediately baffles and overwhelms all our powers of comprehension and distinct conception, than this

very first principle, which all but atheists admit, that God is eternal. *An eternal uncaused existence*, bewilders and absorbs the mind, the moment the attempt is made to grasp it, or closely to investigate it. Yet this is the most indisputable and fundamental truth in all theology, natural or revealed. Verily, when the being and attributes of God are the subject of our investigations, our feeble beam of intellect can guide us but a little distance. We must soon exchange reasoning for humble and adoring admiration.

4. God is *unchangeable*. This we must believe, if we hold the *perfection* of the Deity; because change necessarily implies imperfection—as all change must be either for the better or the worse, and perfection excludes both. Having a perfect foresight of all events, possible as well as actual, and the arrangement and ordering of all secondary causes and agents from first to last, we cannot conceive of any reason why there should be a change, in any of the purposes of the Deity. When God, in some passages of scripture, is said “to repent,” it is always to be understood as spoken in accommodation to human perceptions; that is, the *visible procedure* in the divine dispensations is such as when men repent, and change one course for another. But such expressions are not intended to intimate that there is any change in the purpose, mind or will of God: the scripture assures us of the contrary—that “he is of one mind, and none can turn him,” and that “with him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

The remainder of this answer of the catechism must be reserved for a future lecture. Let us endeavour to derive from what has now been said, a few practical and useful inferences.

1. We should learn always to speak of that great and glorious Being, of whom I have been discoursing, with holy awe; and always to treat whatever relates to him with the deepest reverence. It is told of the celebrated Mr. Boyle—equally distinguished by his learning and his piety—that he never mentioned the name of his Maker, without a sensible pause, both before and after he pronounced the word. I do

not notice this as an example to be exactly imitated; but I am well assured, that just in proportion as any man advances in holiness or true piety, in that proportion will there be deep solemnity upon his spirit, whenever his thoughts turn on God! whenever he addresses him in prayer, or whenever he speaks of his Maker to others. How inexpressibly shocking is it then, to hear that great and glorious name, which angels and seraphs repeat with profoundest veneration, taken lightly and irreverently—nay in the profanest forms of expression imaginable—on the lips of thoughtless wretched mortals. My dear youth, never repeat your Maker's name with lightness, in common discourse. Never use it but with sensible reverence. Dread also to treat any thing that is connected with the divine Majesty with disrespect, or with levity. I am satisfied that real reverence for the Deity—his name, his word, his worship, his day, his house, his institutions,—is most closely and intimately connected with every thing that leads to true piety, with every thing that is hopeful in regard to the salvation of the soul.

2. Is God every where present? Are we continually surrounded, embraced and pervaded by the Deity? Are all the actions of our lives, all the words of our lips, all the thoughts, and feelings, and secrets of our souls, naked before his eye? How solemn is the thought! The wicked are often afraid and ashamed that *men* should witness their vileness. But what are worms of the dust, in comparison with the infinite God, who is always the witness of what they think, and do, and say—however concealed in darkness; however kept from human knowledge?—Yes,—and he will, at last, bring the whole into judgment, and disclose it to the assembled universe. Oh let us ever remember the presence of God, and our responsibility to him! This will prove the most powerful and effectual guard that we can place, not only on all that we do or say, but on all that we imagine, or wish, or think. He who is duly sensible that his soul is continually open to his Maker's inspection, will be careful of all his thoughts,

and all his desires—of all that passes in his bosom, as well as of all that meets the observation of the world.

But the omnipresence and omniscience of the Deity are, to the truly pious and devout mind, a subject of the most pleasing contemplation, and the source of high and holy pleasure and delight. To the friend and child of God, what can be more gratifying than to recollect that his heavenly Father, the Almighty God, is ever with him; to protect him in danger; to comfort him in affliction; to support him in distress; to enlighten him in doubt and darkness; to be a very present help in every time of trouble; to be communed with in the closet, or on the bed, as well as in every act of social worship; to witness every sigh, and every groan, and every tear; to hear the very desires of the soul; to listen to every prayer or petition, which is ejaculated from the heart when no words are uttered; to support and comfort in the hour of death; and to receive the departing spirit to the mansions of eternal peace and rest and joy—to a knowledge and an enjoyment of Himself, of which on earth we can form no adequate conception. My dear children! make God your friend. There is a happiness in having him for your friend and father, that cannot be described. It fills, and was intended to fill, the whole soul. It is not to be compared with any earthly enjoyments. They never fully satisfy; and they are fleeting at the best. Soon you must leave *them*, or they be taken from *you*. But in the friendship, and favour, and enjoyment, of the almighty and eternal God, there is a pleasure, a holy, a serene, and sometimes an ecstatick joy, that satisfies every desire of the soul—of which accidents cannot deprive you, of which death itself cannot rob you.—Rob you, did I say?—Death will only shake off those incumbrances of flesh and sense, which hinder and debase, and circumscribe this heavenly delight; and render it pure, perfect and eternal, in the bosom of our God and Saviour. It is to this that true religion seeks to lead you. Will you not listen to her voice? Will you not yield to her solicitations? Will you prefer the dust and dross of time before this heavenly treasure? Say,

in the strength of God that you will not. Say that from this hour, let others do as they will, you will seek, till you find “the pearl of great price—the good part which shall not be taken away from you.” Father of mercies!—may this be the resolution of every hearer; and may thine own blessed Spirit render the resolve effective. We ask it in the name and for the sake of Christ our Saviour—Amen.

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## LECTURE VII.

*What is God?—continued.*

In our last lecture we entered on the discussion of that answer in our Shorter Catechism which relates the being and perfections of God, and which is thus expressed—“God is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.” A short statement was given of the manner in which the existence of the Deity is proved; and we also considered briefly his spirituality, infinity, eternity and unchangeableness. Without farther recapitulation, we proceed to consider the remaining attributes of the Deity, as specified in the answer before us—Of these the next in order is *Wisdom*.

This, like all the other divine attributes, is infinite. The *omniscience* of the Deity is included in his attribute of wisdom. Of this something was said, in speaking of the immensity of the Supreme Being. I now add, that “all things in all their relations, all things existing and all things possible, are the objects of the divine knowledge.”\* The Deity Himself, I repeat, is perfectly known only to Himself. That which is finite never can comprehend that which is infinite. It is the highest expression of God’s unbounded knowledge, to say that he perfectly knows Himself.

\* Witherspoon.

The knowledge which the Deity has of his creatures, and of their actions both present and future is, in no degree, dependent on the creatures. To him nothing is contingent. He has a certain and infallible foreknowledge of all those events and all those actions, which we denominate casual or contingent. Very many of the things predicted, or prophesied of in holy scripture, depended on the free actions of moral agents. Yet these actions, it is plain, were perfectly known to God, hundreds of years before any of the agents existed. This foreknowledge did not impair the freedom of the agents; nor can we tell how their actions were foreknown. Still, we have the most unquestionable evidence of the fact. Nor was this only some *general* foresight or prescience. It was a *particular* knowledge of every individual creature concerned, and of every circumstance of his conduct or actions.

“Wisdom is usually considered as respecting some end to be obtained; and it implies the clear discovery of the best and most effectual means of attaining it.”\* In all the works of creation and providence, the infinite wisdom of God is conspicuous. If we search into what are called the laws of nature—if we observe the order, harmony, and regularity of the heavenly bodies; or analyse the various material substances; or consider the immense number and diversity of structure of living creatures, and how each one is formed to answer the purpose of its existence; or take a survey of the all but infinite variety and beauty of the vegetable kingdoms; or contemplate the structure and organization of our own bodies, and the powers and faculties of our minds; and if, in all, we mark the wonderful adaptation of means to ends, and the provision which is made for the preservation and gratification of all sentient beings—we shall every where be struck with the infinite wisdom of the great Creator; and we shall find enough to overwhelm our minds, if we attempt to comprehend it.

But especially in the plan of redemption by Jesus Christ,

\* Witherspoon.

the wisdom of God shines with transcendent lustre. No wisdom short of that which is infinite could have devised that plan in which “mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other”—In which all the claims of violated justice are completely satisfied, while yet the offending sinner is not only justified and acquitted, but qualified for the happiness of heaven and raised to the eternal enjoyment of it. “Christ the power of God, and the *wisdom* of God,” the great apostle of the gentiles represents as the epitome of his preaching—And any system of religion which exhibits salvation by Christ as a scheme which *human wisdom* might devise or provide for, is unquestionably false; and he who has never seen the wonderful wisdom of God, as manifested in every part of this “great salvation,” is yet in that blindness in which, according to St. Paul, the god of this world holds those who believe not.

The next attribute or perfection of God, mentioned in the answer before us, is his *Power*. The *omnipotence* of the Deity is conspicuous in all the works of creation and providence. When we look at the visible universe, and recollect that there was a period in which it had no existence, and that it sprang into being at the word of the Almighty,—how are we lost in astonishment at the power which could produce such an effect! The formation of something out of nothing, is indeed an operation incomprehensible to the human mind. Hence the atheism of philosophers both ancient and modern: they have professed to believe matter eternal, because they could not comprehend how it should be formed out of nothing. Yet they have been driven into absurdities unspeakably gross, and even ridiculous, on every hypothesis which they have ever been able to form. The truth is, that exertion of Almighty power by which the material universe was called out of nothing into existence, although indeed *incomprehensible*, is not *incredible*, if we admit the being and perfections of the Deity. These admitted, creation by the power of God, affords infinitely the most rational and the most credible account of the origin of all other beings, that

ever was or can be giv'en—"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth—He said let there be light and there was light—He spake and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast."

The same power which created, is necessary to preserve and uphold the universe. The *laws of nature* are words without a meaning, if they are not intended to express the *will or appointment of the Deity*. Whether we do, or do not maintain, that preservation is a constant creation, we must admit that all things *depend* on God, are ordered according to his sovereign will, exactly fulfil his purposes, and will cease their operations whenever he shall please. The revolution of the seasons; the succession of day and night; the fertility of the earth, and all the secondary causes that produce it; a salubrious or a pestilential atmosphere; winds and tornadoes; thunder and storm; earthquakes, volcanoes, and inundations; are all ordered and directed by the God of providence. Yea, "a sparrow falleth not to the ground," nor a hair from our heads, "without our heavenly Father." To believe this, is surely as comfortable as it is pious.

Nor must we forget the illustrious display of the almighty power of God in the glorious work of man's redemption. It was manifested in "laying the chief corner stone, in the union of the human nature with the person of the eternal Son of God; in supporting Him under the inconceivable load of divine wrath, for our sins; and in spoiling principalities and powers, in that very nature which Satan had vanquished at first." Hence the Redeemer is called the "*power*," as well as "*the wisdom of God*." Hence he is denominated "*the arm of the Lord*," and "*the man of his right hand*."

We proceed to consider the *Holiness* of God. Holiness is sometimes used to denote the aggregate of the moral perfections of the Deity, and sometimes as indicating a distinct attribute. It is manifestly used in the latter sense, in the answer before us; because the moral perfections of God are immediately and severally enumerated. "Taken in this limited sense, (says Dr. Witherspoon) it is extremely difficult

to define or explain. Holiness is that character of God, to which veneration, or the most profound reverence in us, is the correspondent affection. It is also sometimes expressed by purity."—"Holiness"—say Erskine and Fletcher, in what is called\* 'the Synod's Catechism,' and to which I own myself indebted in these lectures, for many useful thoughts—Holiness is that essential rectitude, or integrity of the divine nature, whereby he infinitely delights in his own purity, and in every thing agreeable to his will, and hath a perfect hatred and abhorrence of every thing contrary to it. God is as necessarily holy, as he is necessarily God:—"Who shall not fear before thee, O Lord; for thou only art holy." He hath put, as it were, a peculiar honour on his own holiness, inasmuch as he singles it out as the attribute to swear by for the accomplishment of his promises and threatenings—"Once I have sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David." Finite creatures, even of the highest order, are not able to behold the brightness of this attribute, in their Creator: For when the angels themselves view his infinite holiness, as manifested in Christ, they are represented as covering their faces with their wings. Every thing pertaining to God bears the impress of his holiness. He is said to be holy in all his works—His word is holy; his covenant, or promise is holy; his sabbath is holy; his people are holy; his ministering spirits are the holy angels; and the place where he specially dwells is the high and holy place. The greatest opposite of the holiness of God is sin; and the highest display of his holiness in the hatred of sin was, in hiding his face from his own beloved Son, as bearing our iniquity.

The next divine attribute, in the enumeration before us, is

\* In the use of the catechism here mentioned, the author has sometimes taken the language of the book, and at other times he has changed it, or intermixed it with his own. He has placed the marks of quotation where he has made no change in the expression, but not where a change has been made. He wishes it may be remembered that where marks of quotation appear, without a distinct reference to an author, the proper reference is to this catechism; and he hopes that the explanation here given is sufficient to prevent the charge of any unfairness.

the *justice* of God. *Justice* has been defined—"an invariable determination to render to all their due."\* In the Deity, it is that essential attribute of his nature, by which he is infinitely righteous or equitable in himself, and in all his dispensations and awards towards his creatures. The justice of God is manifested in giving laws, perfectly holy, just and good, to all his rational and moral creatures; and in his rendering to them their due, according to law, without respect of persons. Hence when angels sinned, they were cast down to hell, and are reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day: And when man sinned, he would inevitably have shared in the same awful doom, if the wisdom of God, in union with his mercy, had not provided a way to answer the demands of his justice, by the vicarious atonement of Christ our Saviour—a way in which God can be just, and yet the justifier of every one that believeth in Jesus—"He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

In speaking of the divine justice, I must take a passing notice of what has been called *the vindictive justice* of God; but which I would rather call his *vindicatory* justice, because the term *vindictive* is now, I think, scarcely used but in a bad sense. The point in debate—for it has been much debated—is, whether we have reason to believe that it belongs to the divine justice, to punish transgression without regard to consequences, that is, to the ultimate benefit of the transgressor, or to the example as a warning to others. On this I remark in the first place, that it is impossible for us to know whether every instance of the punishment of transgression which can ever take place, may not be connected with the good of the whole intelligent and moral creation of God. For aught we know this may be so; although the manner in which it takes place may not be discernible by us. Nay, the whole force of inductive reasoning, seems to me to be in favour of the belief, that such is really the fact. In the mean time, the sense of ill

\* Witherspoon.

desert, which natural conscience produces in our minds whenever we do what we know to be wrong, makes guilt, *simply in itself*, the proper object of punishment. And if guilt, when only *imputed*, caused such dreadful sufferings as it did, when the sinless Saviour stood in the sinner's place, we cannot rationally believe that it is consistent with the divine justice, that it should ever go unpunished. This, my young friends, is a principle which enters deeply into the whole system of gospel truth. Almost all loose and dangerous opinions in religion may be traced to *a light sense of the inherent evil of sin*;—to a false notion that the justice of God does not *always* require its punishment, or expiation. Dr. Owen has written a most able treatise on this subject, which, if it should fall in your way, I advise you carefully to peruse. It was written in Latin, and the English translation is not a good one; but it will serve to give you a view of the powerful arguments by which the vindictory justice of God is maintained.

We come now, in the next place, to consider the *goodness* of God. This perfection implies a disposition in the Deity to *communicate happiness* to all his creatures. The goodness of God appears in all his works;—in creation, in providence, and pre-eminently, in the work of redemption.

No one who observes attentively the common appearances of nature; not only the revolution of the seasons and the succession of day and night, but the abundance which the earth produces, for the support both of man and beast; the admirable provision made in the organization of every animal, to enable it to acquire its proper food, to propagate and preserve its species, and to guard itself against its natural enemy; and the actual gratification and enjoyment experienced by every creature that has life;—no one who observes all this, can fail to be convinced of the goodness of the great Creator, in the formation, preservation, and government of the universe. That there is much natural evil, much suffering of pain and distress, none can deny. But still, it is also undeniable that there is, on the whole, an immense balance or preponderance of happiness or enjoyment. “The earth is full of the good-

ness of the Lord—He openeth his hand and satisfieth the wants of every living thing.” And it belongs to the believer in revelation—and to him only it belongs—to give some account of the misery and suffering that exist in our world. He knows that the world *now*, is not what it was when it came fresh from the forming hand of its Almighty Author. *Then*, he who made it, on the most perfect survey, saw and pronounced it *good*. The sin of man has introduced into our world all the *natural* evil that has marred, and that still mars, the fair creation of the God of goodness. Never was there a fouler slander than that which charges the holders of the sentiments contained in our catechism, with representing the Deity as having *made* man a sinner; as having doomed him, by *a necessity of nature*, to misery. No verily, whatever difficulty there may be—and difficulty there is, on every system or hypothesis—in accounting fully for the present guilty and suffering state of man, and the various evils that infest the world, we hold that *God created all things good*; that he created man in knowledge, righteousness and true holiness; and that it would be entirely irreconcilable with all our ideas of the goodness and perfection of God, if any part of his *original* creation had not been good—perfectly good. But it is just a plain and undeniable matter of fact, that misery and guilt are in the world. Let those then who object to our catechism tell us how they came into the world, and how and why they continue in it. Do they admit that misery is the consequence of man’s sin? If so, they thus far agree with us. But will they dare to say that the Deity could not have ordered it otherwise—could not have formed and guarded a moral agent, such as man, so that he should neither have sinned nor suffered? If he could, and yet did not so form and guard him, then let them reconcile this with the goodness of God. If they altogether deny human guilt, then let them reconcile it with the divine goodness, that there is so much suffering where there is no offence. The truth is, that the orthodox sentiments are the most *rational* and the *easiest of belief*, as well as the most scriptural. We hold that “God

made man upright, and that he hath sought out many inventions.” But I am digressing too far. We shall hereafter have occasion to enter more at large into this subject.

In the mean time, I remark, that every mind which is under the influence of truly pious feelings, views it as a wonderful exhibition of the goodness and forbearance of God, that there is not unspeakably *more* suffering than there is, in a world in which there is so much sin; so much awful provocation of a righteous and holy God—That notwithstanding it all, he spares rebels and blasphemers, crowns their lives with temporal mercies innumerable, continues to them the offers and invitations of mercy, and eventually brings some of them to repentance and salvation. This leads me to remark, that the most conspicuous and transcendent display of the goodness of God, ever made to our world—or probably to the universe—was the gift of his own coequal Son, to be our Saviour—To be a Saviour, at the expense of a life of hardship and suffering, and a death of ignominy and agony united—the Saviour of fallen, guilty, rebellious men; and thus to raise them from all the ruins of their apostacy, to be children of God, and heirs with his own dear Son of an eternal inheritance, a kingdom of glory in the heavens. Here is a display of goodness emphatically *Godlike*; a display which, like all the other ways and works of God, surpasses the bounds of human comprehension.

It is proper to remark, that the attribute of *Mercy* is included in that of goodness, in the enumeration before us. Mercy is a particular form, or kind of goodness; and to us sinners it is the most interesting form. “Mercy is a readiness to forgive the guilty, and to remit deserved punishment—It is never mercy to pardon, if it would not have been perfectly equitable and just to punish.”\* Mercy is that attribute of God, of which the light of nature gives but feeble and dubious intimations. The *assurance* of it comes, and *can* come, from revelation only. None but the Being who was

\* Witherspoon.

offended could *certainly* tell that he would forgive: and guilt, which is always fearful and suspicious, required the strongest and most explicit assurance that it would, on the proper terms, be pardoned. This assurance, I repeat, could not be given but by an express revelation—and for ever blessed be the God of all goodness, it has thus been given; and given in connexion with that unspeakable gift of the Son of God, which assures pardon and acceptance even to the *chief* of penitent and believing sinners.

It only remains, in considering the answer before us, to speak of *Truth*, as an attribute of God. “*Truth*\*—it has been well observed—is inseparable from infinite perfection: for any departure from truth must be considered as arising from weakness, or necessity. What end could be served, to a self-sufficient and all-sufficient Being, by falsehood or deception?” There is I think no one of the attributes of God more insisted on in holy writ than truth. He is there characterized, by calling him “the God of truth;” and it is affirmed that “it is impossible for God to lie.” He is true to his word; true to his covenants; true to his purpose; true to his promises; true to his threatenings. The great aggravation of the sin of unbelief, is that “it makes God a liar;” and all false dealing with the God of truth, is represented as involving guilt of the most awful kind. The tremendous doom of Ananias and Sapphira, was brought upon them because they had not merely “lied unto men, but unto God.”

Thus have we taken a cursory and general notice of the divine attributes. In what you have heard upon them, my aim has been to suggest the *leading* ideas which we derive, in regard to them, both from reason and revelation. *Only* the leading ideas could be suggested—A whole lecture might have been employed on each attribute, without exhausting the subject.

The practical inferences derivable from a consideration of the divine attributes, are both very numerous and very impor-

\* Witherspoon.

tant. We cannot however do more than direct your attention, in the briefest manner, to a few.

1. Did we derive our being, and all our powers from God; and are we constantly upheld, preserved and provided for, by him? Then how perfectly reasonable is it, that he should require us to love, and serve, and obey him; and how unspeakably unreasonable, wicked and rebellious is it, in those who refuse their affections and obedience to their Creator, Preserver and Redeemer—but give them all to his enemies? O that this could be seen in its proper light, and be felt with some degree of its proper force and impression!

2. Is God infinitely wise? How should this induce his covenant people, to trust him unreservedly to order for them the whole lot of life, and all that concerns them for time and eternity? What can they desire more, than that infinite wisdom should choose for them that which is best?—and this it will do assuredly. But how vain, as well as impious, are all the plots, and plans, and designs of the wicked, either to oppose the purposes of God, or to escape the punishment with which he has threatened them. Let them consider in time, that there is “no knowledge, nor counsel, nor device against the Lord—He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and carrieth the counsel of the foward headlong.”

3. Considering the infinite power and truth of God, how safely may his children rely on the performance of every word which their Heavenly Father hath spoken? How implicitly may they trust him for a victory over sin, Satan and the world; saying “if God be for us, who can be against us?” and for the discharge of any commanded duty, however difficult? saying with the apostle, “I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me.” But with what perfect ease can this Almighty Being blast and defeat all the power and efforts of his enemies? He has only to will it, and it is done. Oh how inexpressibly awful it is for a worm of the dust, however distinguished among his fellow worms, to fall into the hands of an Almighty avenger! “Be wise, now, therefore, O ye kings, be instructed ye judges of the earth—

serve the Lord with fear—kiss the Son lest he be angry and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

4. When we consider the holiness of God, how deeply abased should the holiest man on earth be, in reflecting on the remainders of sin that yet cleave to him. It was a view of the holiness of God that laid Job in the dust of silence before his Maker, and which made him “abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes.” And the very same effect it will always produce, on all who have the same right perceptions that Job had—And oh! how do these views endear our adorable Mediator, through whom we may approach this pure and spotless Being with acceptance—Yea, through whom we ourselves may at last be delivered from all the pollution, and from every stain of sin, and be raised to the high, and pure, and perfect enjoyment of a holy God. But alas! this is the attribute that unsanctified men never love to think of, when they contemplate the Deity—The thought of it immediately stirs up the rebellion of their hearts, because they hate holiness! All their views of God therefore, when they think that they love him, are essentially defective. They love not the true God, but a being of their own imagination.

5. From the justice of God we infer the certain punishment, the tremendous doom, of all his irreconcilable enemies—Now they may break his laws and disregard his threatenings, but the hour is hastening when he will call them to his bar, and justice will take its course and have all its demands—Oh the appalling thought!

But those who are washed in the Redeemer’s blood have nothing to fear, even from the justice of God—All its demands have been satisfied by the atonement of their surety Saviour; and it unites with mercy in demanding the acquittal of all believers—“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and *just* to forgive us our sins.”

6. Finally—Let the goodness of God fill the hearts of his people with gratitude; especially for the blessings of redemption, of which they have been made the partakers—for the

unspeakable benefits which result from their adoption into the family of Christ; for the rich consolations that they derive from this high privilege on earth, and for the incorruptible inheritance and glorious crown which it assures to them in heaven.

And knowest thou not, O man—O impenitent sinner!—that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance! Consider that every act of sin which thou committest is an act of direct insult and rebellion against the best Being in the universe; against the source of all the good there is in the universe; against thy own first and greatest Benefactor; against the God who is upholding and preserving thee, and crowning thy life with loving kindness and tender mercy—at the very time thou art returning Him evil for good, by rebelling against Him. Where is any sense of duty? Where is any sentiment of gratitude? Where sleeps every worthy principle and feeling of which thy heart is capable, if the goodness of God leadeth thee not to repentance?—if it do not fill thy soul with shame and confusion, by showing thee thy baseness; if it do not break thy heart with grief and contrition for thy guilt; if it do not melt thy whole soul into penitential sorrow for all thy vileness; if it do not lead thee to break off thy sins by repentance, and to return unto the Lord that he may have mercy upon thee, and to our God who will abundantly pardon. Amen.

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## LECTURE VIII.

*Are there more Gods than one?*

*How many Persons are there in the Godhead?*

HAVING considered the being and attributes of God, the next point that claims our attention is his *Unity*. This is expressed, in the answer to the fifth question of our catechism, thus—"There is but one only, the living and true God."

Call to mind that all the arguments which have been adduced to prove—and which I think do most conclusively

prove—the being of a God, go also to prove as clearly, that he is infinite and perfect in his being and attributes. Keep this in view, and then observe attentively, that one infinite and perfect being is sufficient to give existence at first to all other beings, and to uphold and govern them afterward. In a word, there is no need, in accounting for the universe, to *suppose* more than one supreme cause. Nor is this all. One infinite and perfect being, *absolutely and necessarily precludes a second*. If two beings be supposed of equal or similar attributes, neither can be infinite or perfect: because it is manifest that if to either were given the powers and prerogatives of the other, there would be an increase of what was possessed before. But what is infinite and perfect admits of no possible increase; and therefore, as we have seen that God is *infinite and perfect*, there is and can be but *one* God. This appears to me perfectly conclusive, as a matter of reasoning: and all that we see, even without the aid of holy scripture, goes to confirm the conclusion as a matter of fact. When we contemplate the visible universe, we every where behold, not only power, wisdom and goodness, but in the perfect *harmony and order* of all, we see *a unity and simplicity of design and end*, which most powerfully impress the conviction that one, and but one glorious being, created it at first, and upholds and governs it continually.

But my young friends, although this important truth, that there is but one God, is so clear to us that it seems unnecessary to spend much time in its proof or illustration, yet you ought to remember, and to be very thankful while you remember, that your belief of it is to be attributed to your being blessed with the light of revelation. Infidels may say what they will of the uselessness of the Bible, and of the sufficiency of the light of nature without it. But the truth is, that very much of what they call the light of nature they borrowed from the Bible, and they most unjustly and ungratefully refuse to acknowledge their obligation. When a point is clearly revealed and taught, it is often easy to show that it is *agreeable to reason and nature*, and yet reason and nature left

to themselves, would never have *taught* it. This is peculiarly true in regard to the subject before us. The unity of the Deity appears plain to us; and it is so in reality. But for this we are entirely indebted to the Bible; for as heretofore observed, mankind in every age and nation of the world in which the light of revelation has not been enjoyed, have been Polytheists and idolaters. The grossness of idolatry in the heathen world, even in those nations that were the most improved in other respects, was shocking in the extreme. It presents, when seriously contemplated, one of the most humbling views of the weakness and depravity of our nature that can possibly be taken. There was scarce an animal however mean or loathsome; scarce a vice or passion however detestable, which was not deified and worshipped. It is to point our attention distinctly to the difference between the divine object of Christian worship and the impure rabble of heathen deities, that the answer of the catechism calls Jehovah, “the one only living and true God”—“The gods of the heathen are vanity and a lie.”

It may appear a strange infatuation to us, that the ancient Israelites were so strongly and obstinately prone to the worship of idols, as the scriptures represent them to have been. But this arises from not conceiving justly of the state of the world at that time. The present state of India may best illustrate it. There idolatry still prevails, as it did among the heathen who surrounded Palestine and were intermingled with the Hebrews, in the time of their judges and their kings. In India at present, all descriptions of the people are idolaters; their false gods amount to many thousands; their temples are splendid, and the whole service is calculated to inflame and gratify unhallowed appetites and passions.

It was to guard the chosen people of God against the various abominations of idolatry, and at the same time to establish for the church in every successive age, the most fundamental article of all true religion, that so much was said and done to retain among the ancient Israelites the practical belief of the unity of God. It would consume more than the

time allotted to this lecture, only to read over the passages in which this great truth is taught and inculcated, either directly or collaterally; for all that is said against worshipping images, or creatures of any kind, is directed to this point. It will therefore be sufficient to remind you, that the very first precept in the decalogue has for its subject this essential truth—"Thou shalt have *no other gods before me.*"

I would willingly insist the more on this topick, because there are those who are fond of intimating, and who sometimes directly assert, that what we are presently to consider—the doctrine of the Trinity—is a virtual denial of the unity of God. But we repel the imputation with the most perfect abhorrence, and the answer of our catechism, which we have just been illustrating, is a proof that the charge is groundless, false and base. With this remark I proceed to the next answer, which is thus expressed—"There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory."

It is worthy of remark, that not only is the unity of God exclusively taught in the preceding answer, but that it is repeated in this, in which the Trinity of persons is asserted—"these three are *one God.*" So careful has our church been, to prevent any misapprehension on this great article of religion.

In considering this answer, in which is contained, at once a great mystery and an essential article of Christian faith, it may be proper to explain to you two terms which are used in the answer. The first is the word *Godhead*—"there are three persons in the *Godhead.*" This is a translation of the Greek words *το θεον*, and *θειοτης* (*to theion* and *theiōtēs*), which are used in the New Testament, to denote the *essential Deity*, or the *divine essence*. The answer, then, is—*there are three persons in the divine essence.*

The word *persons* is the other term in the answer that I would explain. Person is a translation of the Greek word *ὑπόστασις* (*hypostasis*). This word is a considerable number

of times used in the Greek New Testament; and is the term employed in Heb. i. 3, where it is said of the Son of God, our Saviour, "that he is the brightness of his (the Father's) glory, and the express image of his *person*." From this probably, the fathers of the Greek church were led to use this term in the plural number, to express the distinctions in the adorable Trinity.

We translate the word '*ὑπόστασις* (*hypostasis*) *person*, because our language does not contain a better term; although the meaning of it is not, we admit, exactly correspondent to the Greek word of which it is the translation. But by *person*, with reference to this subject, we mean an intelligent agent, to whom is applied the personal pronouns *I, thou, he*; and who is represented in scripture as willing and acting, as an individual wills and acts. MARK, in his outline of theology entitled *Medulla*, defines *personality* thus—"A positive mode of being, ultimately terminating and filling a substantial nature, and giving to it incommunicability."\*

We also make use of the word *Trinity*. This is not a scripture term, but it was early introduced by the Christian fathers, to denote by a single word, that unity of three persons in the divine essence which they considered as a fundamental article of Christian faith. It strictly signifies *triunity*, or the union of three in one; and is therefore a correct expression of the idea intended to be conveyed.

It is unreasonable to object to proper and appropriate terms, because they are not found in scripture, when the notion, or idea, which they convey, is clearly and frequently found there. Terms that comprehend several ideas must often be used, unless we introduce a circumlocution that would destroy all clearness of reasoning, as well as all neatness of expression. Those who commonly make the objection to which I here answer, ought to recollect that *Unitarian* is not a scriptural term, any more than *Trinitarian*; and that the word *unity*

\* Modus positivus entis, ultimò terminans et compleans naturam substantiam, ac illi dans incommunicabilitatem.

itself, is but twice found in the New Testament; and where found, has no reference whatever to this subject.

Having thus explained the terms that will be used in this discussion, I shall only farther remark in a preliminary way, that the doctrine of the Trinity is a doctrine of pure revelation. Human reason alone, certainly could not have discovered it. That we have good reason to believe it was revealed to our first parents, I shall have occasion to show hereafter: and that it was handed down by tradition, so as to be in some measure known to the heathen nations of antiquity, has, I think, been satisfactorily shown by several learned writers. But the truth itself, could come originally from revelation only. The light of nature may certainly discover the existence of a Great First cause, and indicate something of most of the divine perfections. But there seems to be no conceivable way in which human reason, unaided by divine revelation, could have arrived at the knowledge that the Supreme Being is one in essence, and yet three in personality.

In farther speaking on this subject, I shall endeavour—

I. To show that the most peculiar attributes or characteristicks of perfect Deity, are, in holy scripture, ascribed plainly, explicitly and frequently, to each of the persons in the sacred Trinity; and in such a manner as distinctly to recognise their personal character.

II. To refer to a number of passages of scripture, which plainly represent, sometimes a plurality, and sometimes a Trinity of persons, in the one only living and true God.

III. To give explanations, offer cautions, and answer objections, relative to this important and interesting subject.

IV. To make some inferences, of a practical kind, from what shall have been said.

The remainder of this lecture will be chiefly employed on the first division in this distribution; that is, in endeavouring to show that the most peculiar attributes or characteristicks of perfect Deity are, in holy scripture, ascribed plainly, explicitly and frequently, to each of the persons in the sacred Trini-

ty; and in such a manner as distinctly to recognise their personal character.

Now, with respect to the first person in the holy Trinity—God the Father—there is neither doubt nor controversy, in regard to the point before us. We have nothing, at present, to do with Atheists: and all Theists, who are not Trinitarians, ascribe divine perfection, or perfect Deity, to the Father. We agree with them entirely in this ascription. We say that the eternal Father is God—the fountain of Deity—and that every attribute or perfection, which we have enumerated and endeavoured to illustrate, unquestionably belongs to Him. But we also affirm, that to his coequal, coeternal Son and Spirit, the very same attributes and perfections are also ascribed, in the inspired volume of unerring truth. Here we differ, radically and totally, from all Anti-trinitarians, from the highest of the Arians to the lowest of the Socinians,—from Dr. Samuel Clarke to Dr. Joseph Priestley. Here, therefore, is the ground of controversy—But O! let us make it something better than controversy. Let us make it the subject of candid, humble, solemn inquiry. Let us approach it with a teachable, honest, truth-loving spirit. Yea, let us lift up our hearts to God, with earnest desires that he would lead us into, and confirm us in the truth; that he would enable us to see clearly, what he has condescended to teach us on this subject in his own infallible word; and that seeing it, we may receive it in love, and rest upon it with unshaken confidence.

We proceed then to allege evidence from scripture, that the most peculiar attributes or characteristicks of Deity, are ascribed, in the manner stated in the proposition, to the second person in the sacred Trinity, denominated the Son of God; and who, by taking our nature into union with his divine nature, is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

1. He is called by the name JEHOVAH, the peculiar appellation of the true God—the great I AM.

There was often a visible appearance of Jehovah, the God of Israel, under the ancient Jewish dispensation. I shall cite at

length a single instance, out of several that might be mentioned. Gen. xviii. 1,—it is said, that “the **LORD** appeared to him,” (that is to Abraham)—In the original it is, “And **JEHOVAH** appeared to him in the plain of Mamre; and he sat in the tent door, in the heat of the day: and he lift up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood by him.” Then follows the whole narrative of the destruction of Sodom, and of Abraham’s intercession for it, till he was silenced by the terms of his own plea. Now, although there were *three* that appeared to Abraham, let it be observed that his whole address was to *one*; and that this one is called *Jehovah*, at least ten times, in this single chapter—is frequently called so, by Abraham himself; and that this one remained with Abraham, after the other two, who in the subsequent chapter are called angels, had left him and gone on to Sodom. Here then is a Being, who is repeatedly called in the language of inspiration **JEHOVAH**—the special, the appropriate name of the true God, the God of Israel. The question is, who this Being was? We are assured from scripture, as well as from reason, that the Father was not, and could not be seen—but that he is revealed by the Son. Mat. xi. 27. “No man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” John i. 18—“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” Can there be any reasonable doubt, without going farther, that the *Jehovah* who appeared to Abraham, was the Son of God, the second person in the Trinity; who at that time assumed a human form, and declared or revealed a part of his Father’s will and purpose to Abraham, the father of the faithful?

But there is much more evidence than has yet been alleged, of the point here maintained. He who is spoken of as *Jehovah*, when visibly appearing to men, is sometimes expressly called “the angel of the Lord;” sometimes, as in his appearance to Joshua, “the captain of the Lord’s host;” and once “the angel in whom the *name of God* was.” There is no hint that a number of messengers were successively employed to make these divine communications. There was but one

glorious Being, called both Jehovah and his angel, who was, under the ancient Jewish dispensation, the medium of the divine manifestations. And various things which in the Old Testament are said to have been spoken by, or addressed to Jehovah, are in the New Testament affirmed to have been spoken of, done by, or addressed to Christ. To give one example—Where the sin of the people against *Jehovah*, when they were destroyed by fiery flying serpents, is referred to by the apostle Paul, it is expressly affirmed to have been committed against *Christ*.—“Neither (says he) let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.”

But what appears to me to settle this point, on the authority of revelation, is a comparison of a prophecy, in Isaiah xl. 3, with what is expressly stated to be a fulfilment of that prophecy, in Mat. iii. 1, 2, 3.—The prophecy is in these words—“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of Jehovah—so it is in the original—make straight, in the desert, a highway for our God.” Now hear the Evangelist—“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. This is he who was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” Here is unequivocal evidence, that he who in the Old Testament is called *Jehovah*, was the *Lord Jesus Christ*, the Son of God, of the New Testament.

Let it then be well noted and remembered, that the incom-  
municable name of God,—the name which was chosen out by  
himself, to signify his absolute independency, self-existence,  
eternity of being, and the cause of existence to all creatures,  
—that this appropriate, sacred name of the Deity is, under  
his own infallible guidance, applied to the Son of God, our  
Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. My dear youth, I dwell so  
particularly on this point, because it does seem to me that it  
settles the whole question before us, on the authority of divine  
revelation. God has expressly declared—“I am the Lord”

—in the original—“I am Jehovah; that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another.” This very name, comprising in it the glory of the ever-blessed God, he has actually and repeatedly given—not indeed to another—but to his own co-equal Son, who is one with himself. What can be more decisive than this?

You will also remark, that *personal* acts and agencies are constantly attributed to this glorious Being, this Son of God,—the Jehovah of the Old Testament, and the Christ or Messiah of the New. Observe also, how the old dispensation and the new are connected together: and how the Son of God has always been the head of the church on earth; always the medium of every divine manifestation that has ever been made to the children of men.

In alleging the remaining proofs, I shall be very brief: but I beseech you to give them a very careful attention, for there is not one of them which even taken separately, does not, in my mind, completely establish the Deity of the Son of God, our adorable Redeemer; and prove his distinct personality in the Godhead.

We cannot stay—it would be an endless task—to confute all the false glosses, and false interpretations, and allegations about interpolations and various readings, which the opposers of our Lord’s divinity have used, to set aside the authority of the texts I shall quote. Be assured however, that there is not one of these texts which I do not verily believe tends fairly to the point, toward which I purpose to give it a direction. Nor are the texts which I shall quote, by any means the whole which the sacred volume contains of the same import. The difficulty is not to find proofs, but to select them.

2dly then.—The Son of God—Christ our Saviour—is, in the most direct, plain, and unequivocal manner, called GOD; and that repeatedly, in the New Testament. Mat. i. 23—“They shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is GOD with us.” John. i. 1—“In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with God, and the WORD

was God." John x. 30—"I and my Father are ONE." It is undeniable that the Jews, to whom this last text was addressed, understood it as asserting that Christ was God equal with the Father: for they declared that it was for this reason, that they took up stones to stone him. Phil. ii. 6—"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be *equal* with God." Heb. i. 8—"Unto the SON he saith, thy throne, O GOD, is forever and ever." 1 John v. 20—"We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ—this is the true GOD, and eternal life." Mark here, that Jesus Christ is affirmed to be the Son of God, and that his proper Deity is asserted in the strongest manner that language can express—"the TRUE GOD and eternal life."

3. The incommunicable attributes of the Deity are declared to belong to Christ our Saviour—the Son of God. *Eternity* is attributed to him, Mic. v. 2—"Whose goings forth have been of old, from *everlasting*." Rev. i. 8—"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which *is*, and which *was*, and which is to *come*, the *Almighty*." But the name Jehovah, itself, peculiarly implies this attribute.

*Immutability* is also ascribed to him. Heb. i. 12—"Thou art *the same*, and thy years shall not fail." This is said in contradistinction from the mutability of the Heavens, and the earth, and all created things. Again, Heb. xviii. 8—"Jesus Christ, *the same yesterday, to-day and forever*."

*Omniscience* is also ascribed to Christ. John xvi. 30—"Now we are sure that thou *knowest all things*." It is worthy of remark, that a knowledge of what passes in the minds or hearts of men, is represented as a peculiar prerogative of the true God, in the Old Testament, and this is expressly and repeatedly asserted to be a prerogative of Christ. John ii. 25—"Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men; and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew *what was in man*."

*Omnipresence* is also attributed to Christ. Matt. xviii. 20

—“Where two or three are gathered together, in my name, *there am I in the midst of them.*” Again, “Lo, I am with you *always*, even to the end of the world.” What is here asserted by our Lord of himself, could not possibly take place, if the attribute of omnipresence did not belong to him.

*Omnipotence*, in like manner is clearly asserted of Christ. Col. i. 17.—“He is before all things, and by him *all things consist.*” *Creation*, is expressly ascribed to him. John i. 3—“*All things were made by him:*” ver. 10—“*the world was made by him.*” And in the passage of which I have already cited a part, there is a formal—I had almost said an elaborate statement, of this prerogative of Christ—Col. i. 15, 16, 17. Observe that it is expressly the Son of God, of whom the apostle is here speaking, and of whom he says—“Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: For by him were *all things created*, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; *all things were created by him*, and *for him*: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” Now it is from creation that the true God is made known, as distinguished from all false gods. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work.” And creation, in all its extent, is here declared to have been produced by our omnipotent Saviour.

4. And finally, *Worship* was given to Christ the Son of God.—It is required to be given to him; it was accepted by him; it is forbidden to be given to any creature; and we know it was refused by an angel. The obligation to worship Christ, is clearly implied in what he says of himself, John v. 22, 23—“For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, *even as they honour the Father:* He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.” The obligation to worship Christ, both in heaven and on earth, is distinctly stated in the following passages—Phil. ii. 9, 10—“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and

given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus, *every knee should bow*, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is *Lord*, to the glory of God the Father.” Heb. i. 6—“ When he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith—*And let all the angels of God worship him.*” Worship was actually given to Christ when on earth, and received by him without reproof or hesitation, in a number of instances:—by the wise men at his birth; by the blind man whose healing is mentioned in the 9th of John; by the woman of Canaan, who besought him to heal her daughter: and after his resurrection, we are expressly told that “ the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain, where Jesus had appointed them: And when they saw him they *worshipped him.*” In like manner we are told that at his ascension—“ while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven: And *they worshipped him*, and returned to Jerusalem.” There is every reason to believe, that this worship offered to Christ, was religious worship. For although the original word used in describing it—προσκυνεω (*proskuneo*) with its derivatives—does not, in all cases, denote religious worship, yet here we have reason to believe that this is its signification; because it is the very word which is used when the centurion attempted to worship Peter, and was forbidden; and when the Apostle in the Apocalypse, fell down to worship the angel who spoke to him in vision, and was charged, “ see thou do it not—*worship God.*” In view of this, it seems impossible not to believe that Christ would have forbidden any to worship him, if he had not been verily God—the proper object of religious worship.

We have now seen, 1. That the appropriate, incommunicable name of God—JEHOVAH—is applied to the Son of God—Jesus Christ our Lord. 2. That he is plainly and frequently called GOD, in the New Testament. 3. That the incommunicable perfections of the Deity are attributed to him. And that creation, the great work of God, was his work. 4. That

we are required to worship him as God ; and that he was so actually worshipped, and approved the act. Now, if this does not completely establish his true and proper Deity, it is not for me to tell, or to conjecture, how it could be done. I repeat it, seriously and deliberately, that if the Deity of Christ is not taught in the scriptures, I do not know how it could be taught. That the evidence is somewhat *diffuse* I admit. But although diffuse, it is not *obscure*; on the contrary, to an attentive and honest inquirer, it is the more satisfactory, because it meets him in so many places, and in so many forms.

It remains to consider briefly, the Deity and personality of the *Holy Ghost*—the third person, or distinction, in the undivided Godhead. Much does not need to be said on this point—Not surely, that it is of less importance to establish and hold fast the Deity and personality of our *Sanctifier*, than of our *Redeemer*—but because when the Deity of the Son is established, that of the holy and blessed Spirit is, I think, at least in modern times, not often denied. His personality indeed is denied, by some who consider the Godhead as residing exclusively in Christ Jesus. But that “when the Holy Ghost is spoken of, a *person or substance* is meant, as distinguished from any grace or qualification that he may possess or bestow, may—says Dr. Witherspoon—be easily made to appear, from many passages of scripture. John xvi. 16—“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the *Spirit of truth*, whom the world cannot receive.” John xvi. 13—“When he the *Spirit of truth* is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” 1 Cor. xii. 4—“There are diversities of gifts, but the same *Spirit*;” —and then, after a considerable enumeration of spiritual gifts, it is added—verse xi.—“But all these worketh that one and the self same *Spirit*, dividing to every man severally, as he will.” The same thing is proved, in all those passages

that speak of grieving the Spirit, resisting the Spirit, and quenching the Spirit.

That the Holy Ghost is truly and properly God, I think appears with great evidence from the form of baptism. The *Holy Ghost* being joined with the Father and the Son, carries the strongest conviction with it, that he is of the same nature with both. The same thing may be said of the form of solemn benediction.

The divinity of the Holy Ghost seems to be distinctly established in Acts v. 3, where Peter says to Ananias, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the **HOLY GHOST**," and then in the same connexion adds—"Thou hast not lied unto men but unto **GOD**."

We might also, from several passages, show that the Divine attributes are ascribed to the Spirit: as *immensity*, in the 139th Psalm—"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" And then follows the beautiful passage, descriptive of the omnipresence of the Deity. *Omniscience* is attributed to the Spirit, 1 Cor. ii. 10—"The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Nay, creation is ascribed to him as well as to the Son. Gen. i. 2,—it is said—"The Spirit of God moved upon the waters;" and Job xxxiii. 4—"The Spirit of the Lord hath made me; and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." And that the same divine worship, or homage, is due to the Spirit, as to the Father and the Son, is conclusively argued, from his being united with them in the inspired forms of baptism and benediction; which are, in fact, acts of religious worship.

Whoever would see what relates to the holy and blessed Spirit, better treated of than in any other uninspired composition with which I am acquainted, should read Dr. Owen's "**ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ**, or a Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit;" a work which I can never peruse without admiring the deep and lucid views of that admirable author, in all that relates to the renovation and sanctification of the human heart.

It has now I hope been satisfactorily shown, that the most peculiar attributes, or characteristicks of perfect Deity, are, in holy scripture, ascribed plainly, explicitly and frequently, to each of the persons of the sacred Trinity ; and in such a manner as distinctly to recognise their personal character. This was our first proposition. The consideration of the others must be postponed to a future opportunity, if God permit.

In the mean time, my dear youth, meditate solemnly on that holy Trinity, in whose sacred name you have been baptized, and to whom you have been solemnly dedicated. O! think often, of the covenant God of your fathers, and of the church in every age; and ask yourselves, whether *you* are in covenant with this glorious Being. Every person in the infinite Godhead is concerned, and has a part, in the work of man's redemption : And is it possible that a matter which has thus engaged the blessed Trinity, should have remained till this time a matter of indifference, or of little concern, to any of *you*! If it has, how irrationally, how ungratefully, how dangerously, have you been acting! Truly it behoves you to reflect seriously, and without delay, on your hazardous situation. You *must* be reconciled to God through his Son, and by his Spirit's sacred influence, or you must perish for ever. When is this necessary work to be begun? Shall it not commence on this very evening, on which you have been hearing of the holy three-one God, to whom you have been devoted; and to whom you are bound by every strong and tender tie to devote yourselves? Will you not begin to do it in this very place, and then go hence to your closets, and there endeavour to draw near to the Father of mercies, through the mediation of his Son, and relying on the aid of his Holy Spirit? And will you not thus seek the benefits of the great salvation of the gospel, till you shall have reason to believe that they are assured to you, for time and for eternity? For this let us pray together.—

## LECTURE IX.

*How many Persons are there in the Godhead?—continued.*

WITHOUT any recapitulation of what was said in the last lecture, on the Trinity of persons in the Unity of the Godhead, I proceed immediately to show—

II. That there are a number of passages of scripture which plainly represent, sometimes a plurality, and sometimes a Trinity of persons, in the one, only, living and true God.

Here, as in the former lecture, I can by no means introduce all the passages that bear on the point under discussion, but only select a few, out of a considerable number. And I shall begin with remarking—notwithstanding the sneers with which I know the remark has been treated—that one of the names of the true God, אלהים (ALEIM, or ELOHIM) which is very frequently used in the Old Testament, is in the plural number. Some of the best and most erudite biblical and oriental scholars, have been clearly of the opinion, that the frequent use of this term to denote the true God, does intimate, and was intended to intimate, that there is a plurality in the Godhead.\*

\* Those who deny that any plurality of persons is intimated in the Hebrew word *Aleim*, have lately affected to look down on the opinions of their opponents as the tenets only of ignorance or weakness. Yet Bishop HORSLEY, whose erudition and intellectual vigour he who questions will only implicate his own, is among those who maintain that a plurality in the Godhead is clearly intimated in this word. In "A Critical Disquisition on the Etymology and Import of the Divine Names, *Eloah*, *Elohim*, *El*, *Jehovah*, and *Jah*," he says, "that whatever may be the etymology of these two words (*Eloah* and *Elohim*—written without points *Alue* and *Aleim*) and whatever the true interpretation of either, it cannot be, without some reason,—it cannot be, as some have pretended from the mere caprice of language,—that the plural word is much oftener used in the scriptures as a name of God, than the singular. That the plural word is used with the design of intimating a plurality in the Godhead, in some respect or other, it is strange that any one should doubt, who has observed that it is used in places, in which, if there be in truth no plurality in the Godhead, the inspired writers must have been determined, by the principles of their religion, studiously to avoid the use of a plural; especially as they had singulars at command. The plural is used in that very precept, which prohibits the worship of any God but one. 'I Jehovah am thy Gods, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.' 'Be not unto

It is no doubt true, that this word is occasionally used to denote inferior beings, and even the false gods of the heathen. But this very circumstance, taken in connexion with the manner in which it is sometimes applied to Jehovah, the God of Israel, seems to me to strengthen, and not to weaken our argument. Thus Hosea, xiii. 4., literally rendered, is thus—“I am Jehovah thy Aleim, from the land of Egypt; and thou shalt know no Aleim but me; for their is no Saviour beside me.” Here you observe that *Jehovah* and *Aleim*, as is frequently the case, are joined together. Jehovah denotes the one incommunicable essence, and Aleim, we say, denotes a personal plurality. Then the sense of the quoted passage—and it surely goes powerfully to the prophet’s purpose—will be this. “I am Jehovah the one true God, thy Aleim—subsisting in a plurality of persons—who brought thee out of Egypt; and thou shalt have no Aleim but me;—thou shalt have no other object of worship, and no plurality in the object of thy worship, but that plurality which exists in my undivided essence—for there is no Saviour beside me.” There are several other passages of the Old Testament, to which similar remarks might be applied.

This word *Aleim*, is in the original, the third word in the Bible. Our translation is—“In the beginning God created

thee, other *Gods* beside me;’ and in every subsequent part of the decalogue, where God is mentioned, the plural word is introduced. In the second commandment, ‘For I *Jehovah* am thy *Gods*.’ In the third, ‘Take not the name of *Jehovah* thy *Gods* in vain.’ In the fourth, ‘the sabbath of *Jehovah* thy *Gods*.’ In the fifth, ‘The land which *Jehovah* thy *Gods* is giving thee.’ Whoever will suppose that this plural appellation of God, thus constantly used in the language of the law, which of all languages should be the most precise and accurate,—thus used in laws asserting and upholding the single deity of the God of Israel—has no reference to the plurality of persons in the Godhead, should be able to demonstrate some other plurality in the Godhead, to which the expression may refer.” Again: after showing the absurdity of the supposition of certain writers, Christian and Jewish, “that this plural word is used for honour’s sake,” HORSLEY remarks—“We have, however, the admission of this learned Jewish grammarian (Aben Ezra), that deep mystery is involved in the plural form of the divine name *Elohim*. What mystery that may be, but some plurality in the Godhead, it is not easy to divine. One cannot but suspect, that it is to avoid a confession of the Christian doctrines, that he pretends to help us over the difficulty, by alleging a plurality, not in God, but in external things. But we have a right to challenge those who follow him in this admission, to allege some other plurality in God himself, than that of the persons, to which the word may allude.”

the heavens and the earth.” Now we have seen in the last lecture, that creation is attributed both to the Son and Spirit: and the selection of this word seems to be made with striking propriety, to intimate that the several persons in the God-head, were concerned in this great work of creation. SCOTT, in his commentary, has fully and distinctly expressed my own views of this subject. He says—“ It is well known that the original word commonly translated *God*, is plural, in a language which has three numbers; and that when thus used, it is joined to singular verbs \* \* \* \* \* This grammatical anomaly, at the very opening of the scriptures, seems to give us some intimation, concerning that mystery which is afterwards more fully revealed, namely, the *Plurality* in the *Unity* of the Godhead. It would indeed be improper to *rest* such a doctrine upon these intimations; yet this should not be rejected as a mere verbal criticism.”

But beside what is intimated in the plural form of the Hebrew word, which our translators have commonly rendered *God*,—as they have almost uniformly rendered Jehovah *Lord*,—there are several passages in which the Deity speaks explicitly of himself in the plural form. Thus, Gen. iii. 22. “The Lord God said”—in the original—“Jehovah Aleim said—Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.” “The expression *become as one of us* (says Scott) emphatically denotes the plurality of persons in the Deity.” To which I add, that by considering the terms Jehovah and Aleim in the manner already noticed, we may see a peculiar propriety and strength in the expression: For then it will read as if it had been said—“The one eternal God—subsisting in a plurality of persons—said, behold the man is become as one of *us*.” The same form of expression is used when man was created: “God said”—in the original—“The Aleim said, let *us* make man in our own image.” In like manner, at the confusion of tongues at Babel, Gen. xi. 7, it is said, “Go to, let *us* go down, and confound their languages.”

Thus, then, we see that in the Old Testament, and in the

very first book of it, there is a clear indication, both of *unity* and *plurality* in the Godhead. We shall now see, that in the same part of the sacred volume, there are sufficient indications of the *nature* and *extent* of this plurality: For it is one thing to know that there are distinctions, and another to know what is the number of those distinctions. There are several remarkable passages in the Old Testament, which we believe show with sufficient clearness, the truth of what our catechism asserts, that "there are three Persons in the Godhead." Isaiah xlviii. 16. "And now, the *Lord God*, and his *Spirit*, hath sent *me*." On this, and several similar passages, the author of that pious and learned work entitled *Horæ Solitariæ*, remarks—"Here are three distinct persons, engaged in one work and declaration. The person speaking by the prophet, is the person *sent*; and styles himself, just before, *The First and Last*. In a preceding chapter, this *First and Last*, is called Jehovah the Redeemer, and Jehovah *Sabaoth*, which last name is applicable on no account, Arians themselves being judges, but to the Supreme God. Nor is the grammatical construction of the text to be unnoticed. It is not said, the *Lord God* and his *Spirit* *have* sent, in the plural number;—but *hath* sent, in the singular number; thereby intimating, the unity of the divine nature, in the plurality of persons." Again—"By the *Word* of the *Lord* (i. e. Jehovah) were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them, by the *breath* (i. e. the *Spirit*) of his mouth." Here again are three persons co-operating to one effect; the *Word*, which is *Christ*; the *Lord*, another person, who can only be the *Father*; and the *Spirit*, a third person." Again—"The *Spirit* of the *Lord God* is upon *me*, because the *Lord* hath anointed *me*," &c. The speaker here is the ANOINTED ONE, or *Christ*; who, when he appeared in the flesh, applied this very text to himself: And the other persons are styled the *Spirit* and the *Lord*: And that this *Lord* or Jehovah denotes the *Father*, is also collected from two passages in the New Testament. Acts iv. 27, and x. 8. Again, Isaiah vi. 3, "And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy,

is the Lord of hosts." The very Rabbins, before Christ, could assert that by this *Trisagion*, or thrice Holy, were to be understood the three persons, or *Saphiroth*, in Jehovah. It is not an idle repetition, or ascription of holiness; but a celebration of the proper holiness and divinity of the three hypostases in *the Lord of hosts*. Nor, as St. Jerom justly observes, is the frequent declaration of "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," without its meaning; but the three-fold repetition intimates the Trinity; and the reiteration of the same name—Aleim—denotes the unity of substance." By comparing these, and many other texts, of the Old Testament, with those of the New; any candid person may be satisfied, that both Testaments concur, in asserting the doctrine of the Trinity; and that believers, both under the patriarchal and legal economy, were not left in the dark, respecting so important an article of their faith and salvation."\*

Witsius remarks—"It is above all things necessary, for the perfection of the human nature, to be well acquainted with what it ought to know and believe, concerning its God. And it may be justly doubted, whether he does not worship a God entirely unknown, nay, whether he at all worships the true God, who does not know and worship him as subsisting in three persons. He who represents God to himself in any other light, represents not *God* to himself, but a phantom of his own brain. Epiphanius seems to have had this argument in view, when he thus wrote of Adam—"He was no idolater; for he knew God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit: And he was a prophet, and knew that the Father said to the Son—let us make man. It is absurd to suppose Adam ignorant, concerning his Creator, of what God does not suffer his posterity to be ignorant at this time; and the rather, since God created man to be the herald of his being and perfections to the new world." Thus far Witsius—one of the most pious, best read, and profound divines that ever wrote.

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\* Horæ Sol. vol. i. pp. 25, 26.

Certain it is, that there is great reason to believe that even the heathen nations—the Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, Phœnicians, Indians, Greeks and Romans—had by tradition, or by an imperfect knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures, some notices of this doctrine. There are strong indications of it remaining in India and Egypt, even at this time. I shall only just remark, that the denial of this doctrine by the modern Jews, is by no means an evidence against its truth. We know that before, and at the time of our Saviour's appearance in the world, they had become extremely ignorant of the real import of their own scriptures. Hence their obstinate adherence to the expectation that the Messiah would be a great temporal prince. Hence their being confounded with our Saviour's question—how could the Messiah be both the *Lord* and the *Son of David*? Had they known the truth, they would have answered promptly, that the Messiah as *God* was David's *Lord*, and that as *man* he was David's *son*—The only satisfactory answer, by the way, that could be given, either then or now, to this remarkable question of Christ. Since the time of Christ, the Jews have become more blind and ignorant than their progenitors were, of the truths of their own scriptures. Maimonides—one of the best and most learned of them—as referred to by the author of Horæ Solitariæ, says, “That MANY excellent truths of religion, which formerly were in his nation, are *quite lost* among them, partly through length of time, partly through the conquest of their enemies, and partly because they were not suffered to be generally or indiscriminately known among themselves. And he points out the whole, as the fulfilment of that prophecy, Isa. xxix. 14, “*That the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid; because of their sins.*”

But although, as we have seen, there is evidence that this truth was known and acknowledged by the people of God, even from the time of our first parents, yet doubtless, like other important revealed truths, it is made more clear and prominent in the New Testament than in the Old. It cer-

tainly was distinctly manifested at our Lord's baptism. Matt. iii. 16, 17. "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending, like a dove, and lighting upon him. And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Here we have distinctly, the *Father* speaking in an audible voice from heaven, bearing witness to Christ as his *Son*, on whom the *Spirit*, at the same time, descends like a dove. This was clearly "a manifestation of the three persons in the sacred Trinity, acting in their proper relations, according to the economy of our redemption—The Father appointing and sealing the Son, to be the Mediator; the Son solemnly accepting the designation, and entering on his work; and the Holy Spirit descending on him, as, through his mediation, communicated to his people, to apply his salvation to their souls." (Scott *in loc.*)

Again: Eph. ii. 18—"For through *Him* (i. e. Christ) we both (i. e. Jews and Gentiles) have an access by one *Spirit*, unto the *Father*." Here, as before, we have the three persons in the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit, and all are represented as concerned in **EVERY ACT** of acceptable worship.—The Father, to whom we have access; the Son, as Mediator, by and through whom we must approach him; and the Spirit, by whose gracious aid and influence alone, that approach can be acceptably made. How fearful then—let me remark in passing—how fearful is it, to attempt to approach to God, in any other way than this which he has appointed.

Again: The form of Christian baptism, appointed by our Lord himself, does appear to me, in the most conclusive manner, to settle this question of the Trinity, as a doctrine of the New Testament. The ministers of the gospel, to the end of the world, are commanded to baptize, in "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Baptism is the initiating ordinance of the Christian church. It is the ordinance which, according to the divine appointment, formally constitutes us Christians. It is the ordinance in

which the party baptized is solemnly devoted to the God of Christians, and set apart to his service. Now to suppose that in this sacred rite, the true God—the *Father*—is named, and put on a footing of equality, with two other inferior beings, or attributes of his nature—the Son and the Holy Ghost—is, to my apprehension, the height both of absurdity and impiety. It cannot be, my dear youth. God does not, and has declared that he will not, give his glory to another. No, it is not another—the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, are the three coequal, coeternal persons, of that one, only, living, and true God, in whose name you were baptized, and to whom you are privileged to be engaged by covenant—This is the covenant God of you, and your fathers.

There is one circumstance in regard to this subject, which has deeply impressed my mind. It is, the manifestation of the adorable Trinity, which we have already noticed, at our Saviour's own baptism, corresponding with the form in which he has required all his disciples to be baptized. It behoved Him “in all things to be made like unto his brethren.” John’s baptism, it is evident from Acts xix. 2, was not administered in the name of the Trinity; and yet when it was administered to our Redeemer, the Trinity was manifested. Compare this with what he has ordered, as the form of baptism for his disciples, and say if, in this as in other things, there is not an affecting and endearing resemblance, between the head of the church and his members. And say too, if it do not afford a strong presumption, that the very Trinity of persons in the Godhead, which was so conspicuous at the baptism of Christ, is that in whose name he has commanded all who belong to him to be baptized. Yes; to that same Trinity which was manifested at his baptism, he has enjoined that we shall be consecrated in our baptism.

Once more. The form of apostolical benediction, is of exactly the same import with the form of baptism. 2 Cor. xii. 14—“The grace of the *Lord* Jesus Christ, and the love of *God*, and the communion of the *Holy Ghost*, be with you all.—Amen.” Here indeed, there is a new indication of the

*equality* of persons in the Godhead. The second person, the *Son*, is mentioned the *first* in order. We cannot suppose that this was done, under the guidance of divine inspiration, by oversight, or without an important design: And what design could there be, but to intimate that it was no derogation from the *First* person in the Trinity, the eternal *Father*, that his coequal *Son*, should, in this instance, be named first? But to imagine that a human being, or a super-angelick being, should take precedence of his Maker, and that grace proceeding from this creature, should be conjoined with the love of *God*, and the communion of the *Holy Ghost*; and that the church should be blessed, first in the name of a creature, and then of *God*, and then of a divine attribute —can any thing be imagined more incongruous, or more shocking? Beyond all peradventure, as in baptism the three persons in the undivided Godhead are taken in as the object of worship and obedience, so in this benediction, they are plainly conjoined as the source of blessedness. Here then I terminate the scripture evidence of the doctrine of the Trinity. And I do it without any reliance, you may perceive, on that much controverted text, 1 John v. 7. “There are three that bear record in heaven, The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.” I certainly am not prepared to surrender this passage as a portion of the revealed truth of *God*; but it is well known that there is real doubt about the authenticity of this text, among those who have no doubt at all about the doctrine of the Trinity. And to rely on a dubious text, which the support of the truth does not require, is really to injure a good cause; because whatever goes to disprove the authenticity of the text, is often considered, however unjustly, as going to disprove the truth of the doctrine. But in reality, the truth of the doctrine does not in any measure depend on the genuineness of this text. Nay, it does not depend on any *one* text in the Bible, taken singly—It is interwoven, as I have shown you, with *the whole* of the revealed

system; it is the main thread that runs through, supports, and gives strength and uniformity, to the entire piece.

We now proceed—

III. To give explanations, offer cautions, and answer objections, relative to the important and interesting subject of the Trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead. It is not my intention, however, to take up the several items here specified, in a separate and formal manner; but only to make a very few general remarks that may be applied to the whole. You will carefully observe then, that while we strenuously contend for the truth, as an essential of religion, that there are three persons in the undivided Godhead, we attempt no explanation whatever, of the *manner* in which this Trinity in unity subsists in the divine essence. We believe this to be a mystery, the depth of which the angels in heaven cannot fathom. Of this indeed, as well as of all other things that relate to God, there can be no doubt that not only the angels, but the glorified spirits of the saints, know more—far more—in the heavenly world, than ever has been known in this. But “who by searching can find out God? Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?” No creature can ever do it. God is perfectly known only to himself—and will be so to all eternity. It will be the happiness of creatures to be continually learning more of God; and yet that there shall forever be still more to learn. Never, my dear youth, never attempt, even in your own minds, to explain or comprehend the *modus*, or the manner, in which the unity and personality of the Deity are constituted. Get clear and consistent ideas of the facts, and of the use to be made of these facts; and make a constant, yea a daily use of them, in prayer and in communion with God; but go no further. Avoid making comparisons—as has sometimes most improperly been done—with a view to explain *how* three may be one, and one three, in the divine essence.

I hold it indeed not to be improper, and shall presently give an example, to show that in things far more likely to be within our comprehension than the doctrine of the Trinity,

we are perfectly at a loss; and therefore that it is not wonderful that we should be so, in regard to this doctrine. But it will be far from my purpose to intimate—for I hold that it ought never to be intimated—that the mode or manner of the divine subsistence, has any *resemblance* to that of creatures. We have no warrant to affirm or to think this; and it is always dangerous to form comparisons or illustrations that imply it. In all such cases, men certainly speak of what they do not and cannot comprehend. Yet it is so far from being any objection to the credibility of this doctrine, that it is unsearchable by us, that this very circumstance is a presumption in its favour. Dr. George Campbell, than whom, on such subjects, I know of no higher uninspired authority, has well remarked—“Unsearchableness to human faculties, is a sort of signature, impressed on the works of the Most High, and which when found in any thing attested as from Him, ought to be held, at least, a presumption in favour of the testimony.” Yes, whenever we speak of God, we always speak of what is unsearchable to mortals.

The doctrine of the Trinity is not at all more incomprehensible, than the doctrine of the *eternal existence* of God. An uncaused cause of all other causes, is what completely baffles all human examination and human comprehension: And it has actually led some to atheism;—not aware, as it would seem, that atheism is absolutely *contrary* to all reason and common sense; whereas the difficulty they pretended to avoid, was not contrary to reason, but only *above and beyond* it. It does seem to me, that those who deny the doctrine of the Trinity, while they believe in revelation, act in a manner very similar. To get rid of what they think a difficulty, they are obliged to treat the revealed will of God in a manner which, to my apprehension, is absolutely inconsistent with the supposition that it is a divine revelation. While they hold to the Bible, and yet reject the Trinity, they seem to have the hardest creed of all believers.

I know indeed, that they have sometimes affirmed that we hold, on this subject, what is not only above reason but di-

rectly contradictory to it: And if we would allow them to make a statement for us, it might really be so. They affirm that it is absolutely contradictory to reason that one should be three, and that three should be one; and that this is the doctrine which Trinitarians hold. But this is in reality nothing better than a wretched quibble, a play upon words, that may deceive the unthinking, but which cannot for a moment be maintained against a fair statement; and I think that of late, the ablest Anti-trinitarian writers have ceased to use it. "We do not say that there are three Gods and yet one God; three persons and yet one person; or that the Divine Being is three in the *same sense and respect* that he is one; but only that there is a distinction, consistent with a perfect unity of nature."\* In this there is nothing contradictory to reason, or inconsistent with it. I believe that every individual who now hears me, is a being composed of three principles—a *body*, which by itself is lifeless matter; a *soul*, or system of animal spirits, which animates this matter, and which we have in common with the brutes; and an immaterial and immortal *spirit*, which is, I know not how, connected with the other two principles; and that all together constitute one rational and accountable creature. This is a very old opinion; and Doddridge supposes it is referred to by St. Paul, when he prays that "the body, soul, and spirit" of his Christian brethren, may be preserved and sanctified. Now, is there any thing irrational, or self-contradictory, in my holding the individuality of every human being, and yet holding that there are three distinct principles, in every such being? Surely not. Neither can I at all explain or comprehend, *how* these three distinct principles are connected together, so as to make one individual. I only know the fact. And is it—I ask most solemnly—is it wonderful, that we cannot explain or comprehend the *manner* of our Maker's existence, when we cannot explain or understand the *manner* of our own existence!—I again remind you distinctly,

\* Witherspoon.

that this illustration is intended only to show, that it is not unreasonable for us to believe what we cannot explain and comprehend, in the manner of the divine existence; and by no means to intimate that the three principles of our nature, have the least imaginable resemblance to the three distinctions in the divine nature. God forbid! His nature is in all respects, infinitely different and superior to that of any creature. When we contemplate it, especially with reference to this subject, it is peculiarly incumbent on us to lay the rein on our fancy and imagination; to keep close to the truth as revealed in holy scripture; to be humble, admire, and adore.

I have long thought that, making some allowance for his known peculiarity of manner, there is much that is worthy of regard in the following quotation from Dr. Jeremy Taylor, with which I shall conclude this part of our subject. “He (says Dr. Taylor)—He that goes about to speak of the mystery of the Trinity, and does it by words and names of man’s invention, talking of essences and existences, hypostases and personalities, priorities in coequalities, &c., and unity in pluralities; may amuse himself and build a tabernacle in his head, and talk something he knows not what: but the good man, that feels the power of the Father, and to whom the Son is become wisdom, sanctification and redemption, in whose heart the love of the Spirit of God is shed abroad, this man, though he understands nothing of what is unintelligible, yet he alone truly understands the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.”

IV. It remains to make a few inferences of a practical kind, from what has been said on this subject. And—

1. If a right view has, in any tolerable degree, been given of the doctrine of the Trinity ;—if it runs through the entire volume of inspiration, and gives character and consistency to the whole; then certainly we must regard it, represent it, and hold it fast, as an essential—in the strictest sense an *essential* article of the Christian faith.

In every system there must be essential principles which give character to that system, as *a system*. Deny those

principles, and you deny the system. A *name* may remain, but the *reality* is gone. Now if there be any such thing as essential principles in the Christian system, we do believe that this doctrine of the Trinity must be regarded as such. All the grand and distinguishing doctrines of Christianity, stand or fall with this doctrine. They must do so, for the most of them rest entirely upon it. Accordingly, those who deny it, deny the original and radical corruption of human nature; the atonement and righteousness of Christ, as the only ground of our justification before God; the necessity of a supernatural renovation by the Spirit of God; our need of his special aid in all religious duties; and of his sanctifying influences in our preparation for heaven. But remove these truths from the revealed system, and we verily believe that you remove its very essence—you take away its essential character.

We certainly ought to have no pleasure, and God forbid that we should have any—yea, that we should feel any thing but sincere regret and sorrow—in refusing to embrace as Christians, any who denominate themselves such. But in this matter we cannot sacrifice truth—essential truth—to courtesy, or to a false notion of liberality or charity. No truly—the solemn alternative is, we must either give up all our own hopes, or we must give up as Christians, in any thing but name, those who understandingly and really deny this doctrine. A variety in the method of explaining it, and in the circumstantial of it, ought not to exclude any one from our charity. But such a denial as carries with it a rejection of those great doctrines and principles which, as we have just seen, are grounded on it—this is fundamental—This subverts the very foundation of the Christian system.

But, my young friends, do not hold this doctrine, nor any other, as a favourite topick of controversy. It has been well observed, that “disputes about religion and the practice of it, seldom go together.” Cleave to the doctrine of the Trinity for yourselves—cleave to it as the anchor of your souls; but indulge no acrimony, no hostile temper, toward those

who deny it. Beware of their delusions, compassionate their fatal errors, reason with them temperately; but never forget that they are your fellow men and fellow sinners; and pray much that God may enlighten them, and bring them to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, that they may be saved.

2. Finally—Inquire most seriously, whether you have—or have not—made that practical use and application of this great and essential doctrine of the Trinity, which renders the belief of it so important. In vain do you hold the truth, if you hold it in unrighteousness. Have you then devoted yourselves, by your own act, to that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom you were devoted in baptism? Have you voluntarily, deliberately, and solemnly, chosen this God as your God, and entered into covenant with him as such? Have you been reconciled to God, through Jesus Christ, by the operation of the Holy Spirit? Think you, that you have been renewed in the temper of your minds, by the power of the Holy Ghost? Have you, in view of your undone state as sinners, rested by faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, as all your salvation and all your desire? Are you living in daily communion with God—drawing near to him, through the mediation of his Son, and by his Spirit's gracious aid? And are you manifesting yourselves to be the disciples of Christ, by walking as he walked, and obeying all his commandments? These are inquiries of the most solemn import. Happy they who can answer them satisfactorily. Unhappy they who cannot answer thus.—Let such be entreated to look without delay to God, through Jesus Christ, for his Spirit's sacred influence, to renew them unto holiness, and to enable them to believe the truth, not in speculation merely, but with all the heart, to the saving of their souls. Amen.

## LECTURE X.

*What are the decrees of God?*

THE subject of discussion at this time, is the seventh answer in our Shorter Catechism. It is expressed thus—

“The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.”

There are probably few present who need to be informed, that this answer presents one of the most difficult, and most controverted points in theology. Yet in my apprehension, the chief difficulty has always arisen from the reluctance which many feel to receive as truths or facts in religion, things which they know not how to reconcile or explain. But it ought to be recollect ed that we do this in things of daily occurrence, and with which we are most familiar. For example—how *matter* should be moved by that which is *immaterial*—which takes place continually, when the volitions of our minds produce the motions of our limbs and of our whole bodies—is quite as hard to explain or to see through, as how the free actions of moral agents should consist with, and carry into effect, the absolute decrees of God. We are indeed so familiar with the first of these inexplicable things, that we do not often think about explaining it; but when we do, we find it attended with as much difficulty—it as completely baffles our investigations—as the abstruse inquiry with which we have compared it.

I have made the remarks you have just heard at the very entrance of this discussion, in hope they may have some influence in preventing a prejudice against the method in which I propose to conduct it; and in which alone, I am fully persuaded, it can ever be satisfactorily conducted. That all truth is really consistent with itself, or that every truth is

perfectly reconcilable with every other truth, no one who knows what truth is, can for a moment doubt. But human intellect is not competent at present to investigate and reconcile all that is true, or all that may be perfectly easy of solution to beings of higher powers. Let me then request you to remember, that the *manner* in which one truth agrees or is consistent with another, is often unknown to us; and therefore that we ought never to resist the proper evidence by which truth is ascertained, because we see not *how* it is to be reconciled with something else which, on good grounds, we have been accustomed to receive as true. When truths or facts appear to militate with each other, it is indeed a reason why they should be repeatedly and most closely examined on all sides. But if, after such examination, the things which seem to militate appear to be accompanied by all the evidence necessary to establish them severally as truths or facts, we ought to receive them as such—especially if repeated examination serves only to clear and strengthen the evidence. It is perfectly reasonable in such cases to say, “here are two things, both of which appear to be true; both supported by evidence which obliges me to admit them to be true; yet how they are reconcilable I cannot for the present perceive; although I cannot doubt that they are reconcilable, because both are truths.”—Satisfied, as I am, that we ought to proceed in this way, in disposing of the difficulties which belong to the subject before us, I apprise you at once of my views generally—they will be more fully explained and applied in the close of the discussion. My method will be,

I. To endeavour to ascertain and state distinctly the doctrine contained in this answer.

II. To prove it from reason, and from scripture.

III. Not only to admit, but to assert and vindicate other truths, with which the doctrine of the divine decrees may seem to be in conflict; to repel the false allegations which have been made, in regard to those who believe in the absolute sovereignty of God; and to show in what manner the ap-

parently militating truths, relative to this subject, ought to be received and held.

First then, we are to endeavour to ascertain and state distinctly, the doctrine contained in the answer before us.

The word *decree*, or *decrees*, in the sense in which it is used in this answer, is not found in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the word occurs in several instances, and in a manner which might be supposed to be the same as that in which it is used in the Catechism. Yet in other instances, it will be found that the same original word is rendered *statute*. The word *decree*, or *decrees*, therefore, is altogether a *technical term*, adopted by theologians to convey a complex idea; that is, to convey a number of ideas by a single term. The framers of the Catechism seem to have been fully sensible of this, for the express design of the answer before us is to explain the import of this term, or rather of the phrase—*the decrees of God*; and they go on to do it in language which is taken from the scriptures. They define the decrees to be—“God’s eternal purpose,” formed “according to the counsel of his own will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.” This language is all purely scriptural. Whoever will carefully read over the first chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, will there find mentioned, *the choice and purpose of God before the foundation of the world*—that is, from eternity; and that it is expressly declared that believers are *predestinated to their inheritance, according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*. And the same apostle, in 1 Cor. ii. 7, says—“We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which *God ordained before the world*, to our glory.” In like manner, in the 11th chapter of the epistle to the Romans, after exclaiming—“O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”—he concludes the whole with declaring—“For of him, and through him, and to him, are *all things*: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

I have made these references to show you distinctly, that the explanation given in our Catechism of the decrees of God, is wholly scriptural, with scarcely a departure from the very words of inspiration. The phrase “according to the counsel of his own will,” taken from Ephes. i. 11, has, I find, been thought by the systematick writers, to need explanation. Ridgeley says—“We are not hereby to understand that the decrees of God are the result of deliberation, or his debating matters within himself, as reasoning in his own mind about the expediency or inexpediency of things, or calling in the advice of others, as creatures are said to do, when acting in council; for he must not be supposed to determine things in such a way, since that would argue an imperfection in the divine mind. It implies that his decrees are infinitely wise; as what is done with counsel, is said, according to human modes of speaking, to be done advisedly; in opposition to its being done rashly, or with precipitation.” This is doubtless both just and pertinent. But it seems to me, that the remarks are nearly as applicable to almost all the other terms and phrases which are used in this answer, and which are commonly used when speaking on this subject. The words *decrees, providence, purpose, ordaining, predestinating, determining, appointing*, and the like, are all descriptive of mental acts; which acts, when they relate to man, must not only be subsequent to his existence, but to many other mental acts from which they result. But the whole of this is utterly inapplicable to the Deity. His decrees, providence, purpose, ordination and predestination, are as much eternal as his existence.

Perhaps the whole difficulty and darkness in which this subject is involved, arises from our having neither words nor ideas, which are more than very imperfectly applicable to it. We are obliged to use terms which are strictly applicable only to ourselves, and far from being so with regard to our Maker. Succession, both as to time and thought, is inseparable from all that is done by a human individual. But succession of any kind, is not predicateable of the Deity. When

we speak of *decrees*, in the plural number, we do not mean that he decreed one thing at one time, and another after a considerable interval—or after any interval whatever. We use the plural form in this expression, because the innumerable events that take place in time, are all ordered and fixed by the divine purpose and appointment, as much as if each one had been separately the subject of a decree.. But the purpose, or decree of God, is really *one, simple, undivided, act of his will*. In a word, the following lines of Dr. Watts, appear to me not only poetically beautiful, but logically correct—

“Long ere the lofty skies were spread,  
Jehovah filled his throne,  
Or Adam form'd, or angels made,  
The Maker lived alone.

His boundless years can ne'er decrease,  
But still maintain their prime ;  
*Eternity's* his dwelling place,  
And ever is his time.

While like a tide our minutes flow,  
The present and the past,  
He fills his own immortal now,  
And sees our ages waste.”

Having thus explained the terms that we use in regard to this subject, and seen that in their application to it, the use is not *strict*, but *accommodated* and *analogical*, I would state the doctrine before us thus—All events, of whatever kind, that take place in time, were determined, or foreordained by God from all eternity, thus to take place; and all for the ultimate promotion of his own glory. It ought however to be carefully noted here, that all who soundly hold this doctrine, maintain that there is a difference, always to be kept up, between what have been denominated the *efficacious decrees*, and the *permissive decrees* of God. His efficacious decrees relate to whatever is *morally good*; his permissive decrees, to whatever is *morally evil*. In other words, his *immediate agency*, according to his decree, is concerned in whatever is morally good—His immediate agency is *never*

concerned in what is morally evil. Evil he permits to take place, and efficaciously overrules it for good—for the promotion of his glory.

It must also be here distinctly noted, although it is clearly implied in the general statement, and will afterwards be more particularly considered, that the decrees of God relate as much to the *means* or *secondary causes*, by which events are brought about, as to the *events* themselves. Means and ends are equally, and undividedly, the subject of the decree. And the nature and character of the means, whether moral or natural, are not changed, but fixed and preserved, by the divine purpose.

Thus have I endeavoured to ascertain and state distinctly, the doctrine contained in the answer of the Catechism before us. I am now to endeavour—

## II. To prove it, from reason and from scripture.

Here I shall not detain you long. For whatever difficulty some may find in receiving this doctrine, the process of reasoning by which it is established, is, as I apprehend, both short and conclusive; and the scriptural proof is extremely plain and direct. The reasoning process is this—We must believe that the Deity *foreknew* all things, or we cannot believe in the *perfection* of his nature. To say that he was, or could be, ignorant of a single future event, is to deny his omniscience—one of his essential perfections; and it is also directly to impeach his wisdom, by supposing that he acted without a perfect plan. But nothing can be foreknown while it remains *uncertain*. What is not certain, may be the subject of *conjecture*, but not of absolute *knowledge*. Future events, then, to be foreknown, must be perfectly certain. Now, before the events took place—innumerable ages before they took place—nothing could make their occurrence perfectly certain, but the *determination* of God—of God unchangeably ordaining that a system should go into operation, which would infallibly produce these events at a certain time, and with all their attendant circumstances. Thus, we think, that the decree and the foreknowledge of God are inseparably

connected together; and that, according to human conceptions, the decree, in point of order, must precede foreknowledge.

The reverse of all this, is the doctrine of the Arminians. They say that the foreknowledge of God is the ground of his decree: and some, that he foreknew all things without properly decreeing any thing. But it seems to us that the whole of this system exhibits nothing more than an abortive attempt to avoid a startling difficulty.\* We think so, because what its advocates say, appears to us, when fairly viewed, not to afford any relief whatever, in regard to the difficulty from which they seek to escape. We do by no means deny that the future and contingent actions of free moral agents, may be foreknown by the Deity. We think that Reid, in his essays on the intellectual powers of man—in the chapter on memory—has very satisfactorily illustrated this point. But it really affords no sort of solution of the difficulty in question. For it must still be admitted, that with a full and perfect view of what free moral agents would do and be, and all the consequences that would follow, the Deity gave being to those agents—He put into operation the system that was certainly to result in all their actions with all their consequences: and what is this, but virtually to admit, that he determined that these actions, and events, and consequences, should take place? For if he had not determined that they should take place, could he not, and would he not, have forbore to put in train, what he knew would infallibly produce them? So that it comes precisely to the same thing at last. But the doctrine of divine foreordination, as seems to us, is more fair than the Arminian system, in statement—more conclusive in reasoning—more agreeable to scripture, and more calculated to honour God. It was a just and striking reply, which King William the Third of England, made to one, who asked him,

\* It is believed that the Socinians, on this subject, generally agree with the Arminians. There have been some Socinians, however, (and perhaps there may be some still,) who have even denied the omniscience and foreknowledge of God altogether. But of these, it has been well observed by Dr. Witherpoon, that “they are so directly opposite to the letter of scripture, that they deserve no regard.”

if he could believe in this doctrine of foreordination. The reply was to this effect—"I cannot help believing it—for I cannot degrade my Maker below the character of a wise man, by thinking that he acted without a plan, and without regarding the consequences of what he did."

The scripture proof of this doctrine is abundant, and as we believe palpable. We know indeed, that many learned and ingenious criticisms and arguments have been used, to show that the passages we allege will admit of another construction. But with all the erudition and talent which have been employed for this purpose, we do not think that, in regard to many passages, even a plausible interpretation has been given to them, so as to set aside the doctrine in question: And we do maintain, that it is a very strong presumption against any exposition of a passage of scripture, of which the language is plain and the subject evident, if the expositor labours hard to make out a sense different from that which would otherwise occur, and be received as the most obvious and natural. The sacred writers are certainly to be understood in the sense in which they would most naturally be understood, by those to whom they wrote and spoke. A portion of scripture, already referred to,—the first chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, may be taken as an example of what I have here in view. After all the learned and elaborate efforts which have been used, to show that this chapter may consist with a different construction, its obvious and natural import must, we think, have been understood by the Ephesians, and must now strike every unprejudiced reader, as decisively in favour of the doctrine of foreordination or predestination, and of particular election: and so it seems to me it must for ever stand, in opposition to all human ingenuity that may be employed to give it another bearing. The very same might be said of several other extended passages in Paul's epistles, especially in his epistle to the Romans. But such passages are not confined to the writings of Paul, or to any one part of the sacred writings. They are scattered throughout the whole Bible: so that I might spend the greater part of the time assigned to

this lecture in repeating texts or portions of scripture, which either plainly and distinctly, or by fair implication, teach this doctrine. The passages need no comment, and therefore I will not repeat them. I will only refer you, in a Bible with marginal references, to the 9th and 11th chapters of the epistle to the Romans; or to that first chapter only of the epistle to the Ephesians, which I have repeatedly mentioned.\*

I am now—

III. Not only to admit, but to assert and vindicate, other truths, with which the doctrine of the divine decrees may seem to be in conflict; to repel the false allegations which have been made, in relation to those who believe in the absolute sovereignty of God; and to show in what manner the apparently militating truths in regard to this subject ought to be received and held.

I cannot better introduce what I have in view in this part of our discussion, than by a quotation from our Confession of Faith, chap. iii. sec. 1—Let it be well observed, that this section was manifestly intended to contain both an exhibition and an explanation of the creed of our church, relative to the subject before us; that it may distinctly appear that what I have to offer is in perfect accordance with that creed. The section referred to, stands as follows—“God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.”

The first important guard or restriction of the truth here exhibited is, that we are never to consider the decrees of God

\* In committing his lecture to the press, the author thinks proper to specify some of the portions of scripture which he thinks establish the doctrine of divine foreordination and particular election.—Rom. viii. 28—39. ix. 6—33. xi. throughout. Ephes. i. 4—12. 2 Tim. i. 9. Acts ii. 23. iv. 27, 28. xv. 18. 2 Thes. ii. 13. 1 Pet. i. 5. ii. 8. 2 Pet. i. 10. Mat. xi. 25, 26. John vi. 37. 64, 65. viii. 47. x. 26. xvii. 9. Jude 4. Rev. xiii. 8. xvii. 8. Gen. i. 20. Isa. x. 6, 7. 12. xii. 7. Prov. xvi. 4. Ex. iv. 21. Job xiii. 13, 14. xxxiv. 29.

in any such light as to make Him the author of sin. Judge then, with what propriety the members of our communion have sometimes been charged with holding this horrible tenet. It cannot possibly be renounced in more unequivocal language than is here used, in the standards of our church. And if any who call themselves Calvinists hold this tenet, we reject them, with as much promptitude as we reject the impious principle which they embrace. Calvin himself never held it—On the contrary, no man could more earnestly express his abhorrence of it, or more cautiously guard his followers against it. But, say our opposers, your doctrine of the decrees must draw this consequence after it—The consequence must necessarily follow from that doctrine. No—we reply—That is *your* consequence, not *ours*. We utterly deny the consequence. And you have no right to draw it for us, and to charge us with it; for that is to take for granted the whole matter in dispute.

And here, by the way, I would remark, that however frequently it may be done—and it is done very frequently—nothing can be more unfair or illiberal, in controversy of any kind, and especially in religious controversy, than to make our own inferences from opinions which we dislike, and then to charge those inferences on the holders of the hated opinions—when the holders themselves utterly disclaim the inferences, and give sufficient evidence that they are not influenced by them. We may not only think that certain inferences follow from a given position, but admitting that they actually and legitimately follow, yet if those with whom we litigate deny them, and are manifestly not influenced by them, to charge them with the guilt or criminality of such inferences, is most uncandid and unjust. Now, in the present instance, I affirm without fear of contradiction, that there is no sect or denomination of Christians whatever, that would more generally or more deeply shudder at the thought of making God the author of sin, than those who hold that he hath “foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.” They are sensible that to make such a charge would be to deny the moral character of

the Deity, and would be something worse, if worse be possible, than atheism itself—It must ever be considered and maintained as a first and invariable principle of true religion, that “God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.”

The second thing which the Confession of Faith teaches us that we are not to infer from the doctrine of the decrees, is, “that no violence is offered to the will of the creatures.” Here again, you may see with what palpable injustice the accusation is brought against the Calvinists,—for it is the common clamour—that they deny man’s free will, and make him a mere machine. But this is only another inference made by an adverse party, and charged on sentiments, if not on individuals, with a view to render them odious. No truly. We believe that man is as free as he would be if no decree existed. Our freedom of choice is a matter of *consciousness*. We want no arguments to convince us of it, for we *feel* it—We feel that we choose and refuse with perfect freedom: and we are not of the number of those who suspect that we are deceived, by the very constitution of that nature which our Creator has given us. All the arrangements of civil society, all notions of moral obligation, all the punishments inflicted by law for crimes, and all the rewards promised to virtue or bestowed upon it—all these proceed on the principle, taken for granted, that man acts freely, and is therefore the proper subject of praise and blame, reward and punishment. But in addition to this, all the commands and threatenings, all the persuasions and invitations, all the reasonings and motives, which are addressed to us in Holy Scripture,—all these, rest on the assumption, that those to whom they are addressed are accountable for choosing the good, and refusing the evil.—This is not the place for considering, at length, the influence of inherent depravity. I shall at present only say, that we think no rational man can, or does believe, that depravity frees any human being from a full responsibility for all that he designs or does; and for every known omission of duty,

or refusal of obedience to the commands of God, with which he is chargeable.

The third disclaimer, which is made in the Confession of Faith, of a dangerous inference from the doctrine of the decrees of God, is thus expressed—"the liberty or contingency of second causes is not taken away, but rather established." Here you see once more, the falsehood of those who charge our catechism, or those who receive it, with destroying human liberty and the efficacy of means, or of favouring a system of fatalism—No indeed—we leave the doctrine of fatalism to the ancient Stoicks, to the modern Mussulmen, and to atheists and infidels of every description. We know of no sect of *Christians* that holds or favours the doctrine. The Calvinists, or predestinarians, are, if possible, more free from it than any other. For you perceive, by the quotation just recited, that "the liberty or contingency of second causes is rather *established*," than taken away, by this doctrine—that is, the doctrine teaches that human liberty, and the contingency and proper influence of second causes, were as much decreed as any thing else. Whoever therefore believes this doctrine, must believe in human liberty; must believe in the contingency and influence of second causes; must believe that every end is to be brought about by its proper means; must believe that these means are as much in our power, as any thing can be in our power; and must believe that without the use of the proper means, the end is never to be looked for or expected. He who holds any thing contrary to this, is—so far as he holds it—not a sound believer in our Confession of Faith and catechisms—He is not a consistent Calvinist.

Thus you perceive, that we not only admit, but assert and vindicate, the truths with which the divine decrees may seem to be in conflict—while we repel the false allegations which have been made, in regard to those who believe in the absolute sovereignty of God.

But now, as it is conceded that the truths last stated do seem to militate with the position that God hath "foreordained whatsoever comes to pass," it is reasonable to in-

quire,—how are we to dispose of this difficulty? I answer, with frankness and explicitness, that, for myself, I believe, that in following the subject out, there is a difficulty here, which the human intellect will never be able to solve or satisfactorily to remove in this world. It were easy to say much to put the difficulty out of sight; and much to show that every other system that has ever been adopted in relation to this subject is more objectionable, and harder to be maintained, than that which has been laid down in this lecture. This I verily believe to be the fact. If I did not, I would adopt some other system—But it is my deliberate conviction that every other system is liable to more—far more—objections than this. It seems to me, after as close an investigation as I have been able to give the subject, that on the one hand, the absolute sovereignty of God in his decrees and providence is clearly demonstrable, both from reason and scripture; and that, from the same sources on the other hand, the freedom and accountableness of man, and the influence of means or second causes, are equally evident and undeniable. I therefore receive and firmly believe *both* these truths; although I cannot explain *how* they consist with each other: and I feel no mortification, and no reluctance in making this avowal. Why should I, when a similar avowal has been made by men of the first order of intellect that the world has ever seen? Dr. Witherspoon, than whom I have certainly never personally known a man more capable of investigating such topics, closes his theological lecture on this subject in these words: “For my own part, I freely own, that I could never see any thing satisfactory, in the attempts of divines or metaphysicians, to reconcile these two things; but it does not appear difficult to me, to believe precisely in the form of our Confession of Faith; to believe both the certainty of God’s purpose, and the free agency of the creature. Nor does my being unable to explain these doctrines, form an objection against the one or the other.” Here is the declaration of a man of true learning, piety and candour. But in truth, it is not wonderful that such men as Locke and Witherspoon,

should have made such declarations; because they knew that in natural philosophy, and in every thing to which human investigation is directed, the powers of our minds soon reach an impassable boundary; and that we must, and do often—very often—hold as unquestionable truths, things which we cannot explain or reconcile. Witherspoon remarks, that the difficulty before us “is the same in natural as in revealed religion; and the same in the course of nature as in both. The certainty of events, makes as much against common diligence in the affairs of life, as against diligence in religion”—No—It is your sciolists, your half taught people, that think they can explain and measure every thing; and who declare that they will believe nothing which they cannot comprehend. Whoever should really do this, would soon find that he could believe very little.

My dear youth, the subject before you, is one of *the deep things of God*. The heathens tried to explain it, and could not. Revelation does not attempt to explain it; because, probably, it cannot be explained to our comprehension, unless new faculties should be given us, or unless those we have should be greatly enlarged. But revelation professes to give us no such faculties, nor any such enlargement. Revelation takes man *as he is*. It clearly teaches us both these truths, as I think I have plainly shown you; and it attempts no explanation. Let me call your attention for a moment to one text of scripture, in which the efficiency of means and exertions on the part of man, and at the same time his absolute dependance on grace and assistance to be imparted from God, are distinctly brought together—Phil. ii. 12, 13—“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Here, in a single sentence, we have both the principles which I have endeavoured to maintain and inculcate, sanctioned and applied to practice. We are commanded “to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;” and yet taught, at the moment, that “it is God who worketh in us, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure:” And

what is worthy to be noted and remembered is, that our absolute dependance on God, is stated as an *encouragement*—not as a *discouragement*—to exert our own powers, and to use diligently all the means of grace. Let me exhort you then always to view and treat the subject in this very manner. Hold both these truths, and let them both be practical; but never perplex and torment your minds with endeavouring to comprehend the *manner* of their agreement, nor ever be discouraged in attempting any duty because you cannot comprehend it. “It is finely imagined by Milton, that he makes a part of the damned in hell, to torment themselves with unsearchable questions, about fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute. It is certain that we cannot now fathom these subjects—if we ever shall to eternity.”\* Forbear, then, all attempts to fathom them; but as I have said, make a practical use of the known truths; and let the truth always be viewed in an encouraging light—That is, exert all your powers, and use all the appointed means, in the great matter of your soul’s salvation; and be encouraged to this, because you have help in God, who is ever ready to aid by his grace the endeavours of all who sincerely and earnestly ask Him to impart it to them. If this course be pursued humbly and perseveringly, you will obtain salvation: but if it be neglected, you will certainly perish, and the guilt, as well as the pains of perdition, will be all your own. “Strive, therefore, to enter in at the strait gate—For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” Amen.

\* Witherspoon.

## LECTURE XI.

*What are the decrees of God?—continued.*

*How doth God execute his decrees?*

*What is the work of creation?*

OUR last lecture related to a subject of importance, and of confessed difficulty. It was not found practicable to bring within the time allotted to the discussion, all that properly belongs to it, or to the answer on which it was grounded. It is not my intention, however, to detain you with it much longer. But before we proceed to the next answer, I think it may be useful to notice very briefly, a few frightful inferences, in addition to those mentioned in the last lecture, which have been made from the doctrine of the divine decrees, particularly the decree of election; and to enter at least a protest against the justice of these inferences, and of the charge that they are held or admitted, by those who hold the doctrine from which they are said to follow. I also propose to make a few remarks on that part of the answer, not yet noticed, which states that it was for “his own glory,” that God foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

You will probably, my young friends, hear the church to which you belong reproached—for it has often been reproached—with holding *generally* “the horrible dogmas of Calvin.” On this I would observe to you, that it ought to be easy for us to forgive, and even to pity, the authors of this reproach; because I think it is scarcely ever made, except by those who are ignorant both of what *we* really believe and what *Calvin* really taught: and it is weak, as well as unchristian, to be much moved by the effusions of ignorance. If we soberly condemn the rashness manifested in such a reproach, and pray that those in whom it has appeared may come to possess a better spirit, we shall perform the duty which the occasion demands.

In specifying the false charges which have been brought against those who hold the doctrine of the divine decrees, especially as including particular election, the following may I think be mentioned as among the most common. It is said, we believe that God formed a great part of the human race on purpose to damn them—having determined to deprive them of all power to help themselves; that we hold that there are infants in hell of a span long; and that we represent the blessed God altogether, as an absolute, severe, and inexorable tyrant, disposing of his creatures in the most arbitrary and inequitable manner. Need I assure you, that we reject every one of these revolting ideas, with as much *sincerity* as *any* of those who charge us with them—and with far more *sensibility*, I hope, than *some* who charge us? Whenever therefore you hear Calvinists and Calvinism charged with these, or any similar sentiments, remember that the party who does it is either ignorant or malignant—He either does not know what we believe, or he wilfully misrepresents our sentiments. He draws his own terrifick consequences from our principles, and then charges us with them. But we ourselves draw no such consequences; and we earnestly contend that they do not necessarily or fairly follow from any thing we hold. We even shudder when we hear them repeated. If now and then an individual, who has chosen to call himself a Calvinist, has said something that might justly subject him to the charge of holding any of these obnoxious tenets, let him alone be responsible. Let not the denomination to which he claims to belong, be made answerable for his folly and his guilt; for there is no religious sect that could escape scandal on any other terms. There is, I venture to affirm, no established Christian sect, that has not produced individuals who have adopted and promulgated wild and extravagant notions, utterly abhorrent to those with whom they have been associated. I have stated in my last lecture, the manner in which we really hold the doctrines from which these unjust inferences are drawn, and the practical use we are to make of what we hold. I think proper now to add,

that in regard to infants, there are many Calvinists who believe that all infants, who die before the exercise of reason, belong to the election of grace; and therefore that there can be no question, or doubt, of their salvation. SCOTT, who was a sound and very rational Calvinist, was decidedly of this opinion, as appears from his commentary on Matt. xix. 14—“Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.”—“The expression, (says Scott,) may intimate that the kingdom of *heavenly* glory is greatly constituted of such as die in infancy. Infants are as capable of regeneration as grown persons; and there is abundant ground to conclude, that ALL those who have not lived to commit actual transgressions, though they share in the effects of the first Adam’s offence, will also share in the blessings of the second Adam’s gracious covenant: without their personal faith and obedience, but not without the regenerating influence of the Spirit of Christ.”

Before leaving this part of the subject, I will just mention that Calvinists have been divided into two classes; the one denominated *Supralapsarians*, the other *Sublapsarians*. These names have been assigned from the circumstance, that the former class consider the divine decree, in regard to the elect and reprobate, as contemplating man *before* the fall; and the latter class as relating to him only *after* the fall. Both classes equally maintain the entire sovereignty of God, and equally reject with abhorrence all impeachment of his justice, or of any other of his glorious attributes. Those who are called *moderate Calvinists*, are, I believe, generally, if not universally, *Sublapsarians*.

Let us now give a little attention to the important point, that it was for *his own glory* that God foreordained what-soever comes to pass. It is of great moment, my young friends, that you should be sensible that the glory of God is infinitely a higher and better object, than the glory and happiness of all creatures. All creatures united, are to the Creator, only as that which is finite is to that which is infinite. As far therefore as the wishes and the happiness of

creatures interfere with the glory of their Creator, reason and equity dictate, that the latter should be preferred before the former: and as God is perfect, his very perfection assures us that this preference will always take place. It also assures us, that the divine glory will always be reconciled with the happiness of every individual sentient being in the universe, so far as this is consistent with the greatest general good; for according to our conceptions, the divine glory appears to require this.

Recollect the distinction already explained in my second lecture, between the *essential* and *declarative* glory of God. With the essential glory of the Deity creatures can have nothing to do. It is absolutely independent of them, and unconnected with them. It is only the declarative glory of God, with which they and their actions have any connexion. Now this declarative glory consists in the Creator appearing to his intelligent creatures, when fully enlightened, most excellent, most amiable, as well as most mighty and majestick. To his creatures he declares and manifests himself as glorious, when his works exhibit him, at once as *great* and *amiable*, in an *infinite degree*. But to be both great and amiable in an infinite degree, the happiness of his sentient creatures must be consulted, as far as is consistent with equity and the nature of things—Farther than this, certainly not; because if equity and the fitness of things were once violated, this itself would be the destruction of all order, of all moral excellence, and of all amiableness at once. We have every reason then, to believe that the declarative glory of God will be found, in fact, to harmonize with all the happiness that reason and equity should make us wish to be introduced into a system like ours. It is therefore infinitely reasonable, that we should desire the promotion of this glory—It is in itself the highest object, and in its display lies the highest happiness of all good beings.

It has been queried whether infinite wisdom might not have devised a system, into which all the good, and yet none of the evil, of the present system, might have entered. On this I remark, that if we answer this query categorically,

whether affirmatively or negatively, we shall find the answer attended with very serious difficulties. I therefore am deliberately of the opinion, that we ought to give it no other answer than this—that no wisdom, less than infinite, can tell what infinite wisdom, in regard to this subject, could have effected; but our wisdom is not infinite, and therefore it is not for us to pronounce on the subject. We know what has taken place—and we know that our Creator is perfect. We know that his glory is the best object that can be presented to the view of his creatures, and we have every reason to believe that it not only harmonizes with, but consists in, all the happiness that any good being, fully enlightened, would desire or wish to belong to the system which God has actually established. This is enough for us;—enough to make us seek the glory of God supremely, and consider it as unspeakably the most desirable end to be promoted. It is enough to make us see that it is this end which our Creator, from the very perfection of his nature, does and will regard as supreme—in all his works and in all his dispensations.

We now proceed to the consideration of the next answer in the Catechism, which is—“God executeth his decrees in the works of creation and providence.” In the two great theatres of display, creation and providence, the Deity carries into effect his eternal purposes, in all the variety and particularity of their manifestation; and all concentering, like so many scattered rays, to this one point—the illustration of his own glory. It belongs to the following answers to explain, more particularly, how this is done. Here however, it may be proper just to notice a speculation, which, if mentioned at all, should be introduced now. It is, whether we are to consider the whole material and intelligent universe, as having been created at the same time with the world which we inhabit. Some have supposed that myriads of ages before the formation of our world, and perhaps of the solar system of which it is a part, other systems, peopled with intelligent beings, had existed. Some too, are of the opinion, that the work of creation is still going on—that in the immensity of space, new systems are frequently springing into birth, at the

command of the Almighty Creator; and perhaps that some also, having finished their destined periods, are occasionally blotted from existence. It is clear, at once, that this is all matter of mere conjecture, and that nothing certain can be known on the subject. The analogies on which any reasonings on this subject may be built, must be very slight, if not entirely fanciful. Some have thought that it was not deeming worthily of the great Creator, to suppose that he permitted his omnipotent power and infinite goodness to slumber in silence from all eternity, till within about six thousand years. But I am afraid that this itself, is not to think in the most worthy manner of the Creator: For carry the work of creation back as far as you can, there must still have been an eternity before that, in which there was no creature—in which the Creator dwelt alone. We see therefore, that the difficulty is not at all relieved. The truth is, the subject is altogether beyond our knowledge, and beyond our conceptions; and in all such cases, as soon as we perceive the fact to be so, duty and comfort both dictate, that we should cease our speculations.

I do not indeed suppose, that what the scriptures teach us on the subject of creation, was intended to apply directly to any thing but the system with which we are concerned. As to the formation of angels, the scripture does not distinctly inform us when it took place. It once appeared most probable to me, that they were created some considerable time before man. I now rather think it probable that they were formed on the first day of creation. It would seem, from a passage in Job, that they were the witnesses of the formation of man, and rejoiced in it—It is said, “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” It does not appear improbable, that the time that man continued in innocence was a space long enough for the apostate angels to have effected their rebellion and fall, and to have become the tempters and seducers of our first parents.

But we have a little anticipated the next answer of the Catechism, which is—“The work of creation is God’s making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space

of six days, and all very good." Let us take the several members of this answer in order, and make a few observations on each.

1. God made all things of nothing—"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;" this is the simple, sublime, and satisfactory account of creation, which we derive from revelation. Infinitely more satisfactory it is, than all the *cosmogonies*, or accounts of the origin of the world, that have been given by philosophers and poets, either ancient or modern. Of these some supposed that the world was eternal; others that it was formed out of pre-existent matter, which they supposed to be eternal; for it does not appear that one of them entertained the idea distinctly, of the production of matter out of nothing. The Mosaick account simply states that the Creator spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast. You will notice that no attempt is made to tell *how* matter rose out of nothing into existence. The fact is that this could not be told, and cannot be even conceived of by us. How *something* should be made out of *nothing*, is beyond all our conceptions. Talk of mysteries in religion—there is not one of them all greater, or more beyond the reach of our understandings than this. Yet of this we entertain no doubt. Matter was either created or it was eternal. To suppose it eternal, is infinitely absurd, as well as contrary to scripture. To suppose it created is not absurd, is not irrational; for to create it was competent to infinite wisdom and almighty power. In a word, although it transcends our faculties to comprehend how it was created, yet it is in no wise contrary to reason to believe the fact.

2. It was *by the word of his power*, that God made all things of nothing. I have never read any thing so awfully sublime, as the representation of Moses, that God spake creation into existence *by a word*. He willed it, he ordered it, and it was done, it existed—"Let there be light, and there was light." Longinus mentions this as a wonderful instance of the sublime. But turn your attention, my young friends, from words to things—from what may strike the fancy to what

shall affect the heart—and while you contemplate the wonders of creating power, adore the Author of your being, and feel yourselves as nothing in his presence.

3. It was *in the space of six days* that God created all things. No doubt it had been equally easy with God to have made all things in an instant of time. But as it helps our conceptions of the work of creation, now that it is formed, to think of its gradual production, so there were other wise purposes to be answered by it. An example of alternate labour and rest was hereby set, which was intended to be of use in every successive age. And the proper portion of time, to be set apart for the immediate worship of God and the cultivation of a holy and heavenly temper, was in this manner fixed by the divine appointment.\*

On the first day, the general system of the heavens and the earth was formed; and light was created, before the beams of the sun had dawned on the dark abyss—"On the second day, a firmament, expansion, or atmosphere was made, to support the water in the clouds, and to separate it from that which was below. On the third day, the water was drained from the earthly parts of our system, and gathered into seas, either in the bowels of the earth, or in such beds on the surface as were formed for it, and the earth was rendered productive. On the fourth day, the light was collected into its future source, the sun, and the moon and stars were made to appear. On the fifth day the fishes were formed from the water, and the fowls from the same element. On the sixth day, the cattle, the creeping things, and the body of Adam, were all formed out of the dust of the earth; and Eve out of a rib taken from Adam's side: And both Adam and Eve were endued with immortal souls." In all this, a beautiful order is observable, Inanimate matter is first created and organized, the earth is

\* Some recent attempts have been made to show that the days of creation, mentioned in the first chapter of Genesis, should be considered not as days which consist of a single revolution of the earth, but as periods comprehending several centuries. But all such ideas, however learnedly or ingeniously advocated, I cannot but regard as fanciful in the extreme; and what is worse, as introducing such a method of treating the plain language of scripture, as is calculated to destroy all confidence in the volume of inspiration.

made productive, animals are then produced out of matter previously formed; and last of all, man, the lord of this lower creation, is introduced into the world, ready furnished, and adorned in all its beauty, for his use and gratification.

Capellus and others think that Spring was the first season that began its course, after the creation: Or that creation, if you will, took place in the Spring. But in some respects it was certainly harvest time, immediately after the creation; for we are expressly told that the trees and herbs brought forth their fruits and seeds, as soon as they were created. It is also a fact, that in the earliest periods of time, mankind began their year uniformly in harvest; by which however, must be understood the autumnal months. Hence Usher, Scalliger, and Spanheim, with great probability, place creation in the month of September or October.

The theories of Des Cartes, Burnet, Whiston, and Buffon, so far as they are inconsistent with the Mosaick account, are both impious and absurd—That of Buffon is absolutely ridiculous. I shall not state any of them; but only observe, that whenever philosophers have attempted to gainsay revelation, they have never failed to dishonour their own understandings, even in the view of the wisest of their own class, as well as to render themselves odious or pitiable, in the eyes of Christians.

I shall only remark farther on this clause in the answer, that we are struck with wonder, when we contemplate the visible and material creation; but that the *invisible*, immaterial, spiritual creation, is still far more wonderful. The soul of man—that thinking principle, my children, by which you now attend to this subject of creation—is far more wonderful, and far more noble, than the whole material creation. It was for *spirit* that *matter* was formed It was for souls that the world which you behold was created. In your souls therefore, view the most astonishing and noble of your Maker's works below—And while you reverence them, O! try to secure their eternal happiness. Dr Young, speaking of the final destruction of the material universe, justly says—

"The devastations of one dreadful hour,  
The great Creator's six days' work devour;  
A mighty, mighty ruin! Yet *one soul*  
Has more to boast, and far outweighs the whole."

4. When God had finished creation, it was *all very good*. This is frequently repeated in the Mosaick account; and this the holiness and goodness of the Creator required. We cannot conceive that the *immediate* workmanship or production of a perfect Being, should be otherwise than perfect—perfectly free, at least, from all moral blemish. Account for the origin of moral evil as we may, we cannot reconcile it with our ideas of the perfect holiness of God, that he should have made man *a sinner*. He did not make him so. He made him, as well as every thing else, *very good*. And here, let me remark by the way, is the great radical error—the *proto*  
*pseudos*—of all the infidel writers, who have ever attempted to give an account of man—of his origin, state, and duties. Rejecting the scriptures, they take man to be *now* what he was *at first*—when he came fresh from the hand of his Creator. This is an unqualified and fundamental error; and of consequence, the whole of the systems which they build on this idea—that man's natural propensities are all *now* what God at *first* made them—must be deeply and fatally erroneous.

It would be pleasant to dwell a little on the fair and faultless face of creation, before it was yet marred and deformed by sin. Milton has given to it all the colours of his rich fancy, and to him I refer you. But I must not fail to warn you against giving in to any of the fanciful theories—I think them impious as well as fanciful—which you may perhaps meet with in reading, and which all go to represent the Mosaick account of the creation as *not strictly and historically true*. One of these writers will have this account to be a mere fable; another, not a fable exactly, but a *mythos*, or scheme, or story of explanation; another, an allegory, and I know not what beside. Alas! who made these men the correctors of Moses, the great prophet of God? He delivers

what he says as unquestionable facts. As such they were no doubt revealed to him by God, and as such we are bound to receive them. It is expressly said—"Through FAITH we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

With what impressions, my young friends, you may have heard this discussion on creation, which I am now to close, I know not. But the topick itself is certainly calculated to fill the mind with solemn and devout ideas.

1. What a view does the work of creation give of the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God? Who can conceive of that power, at whose bidding the material and immaterial worlds sprang from non-existence into being; and by which they are constantly upheld! How resistless is this power! How safe are they who are secure of its protection! How awful the situation of those to whom it is hostile! Nothing can withstand or escape it. With what earnestness and solicitude should every human being, who is yet in the place of repentance, seek to make the Almighty God his friend?

Again—Who can measure, or comprehend, the wisdom displayed in all the Creator's works?—Every thing adapted to its intended effect, and all harmonizing in perfect order, and in perfect subserviency to the designs of the great Author and Governor of all.

Once more—The goodness of God shines throughout the universe. It is written in legible characters, on all his works. All have a tendency to promote the happiness of his sensitive creatures. "He openeth his hand and satisfieth the wants of every living thing." But you, my young friends—you are formed, not for the enjoyment only of this passing, momentary state, but as probationers for a felicity as lasting as the existence of God himself. Will any of you neglect to make sure of this felicity? Will any sacrifice it for fugitive gratifications? Will any regard it as less than "the one thing needful?" No language can express the madness of such

folly. O! let it be the first and immediate concern of all who hear me, to take care for the happiness of eternity.

2. But the subject we have been considering leads us to reflect on the *imperative* obligations to duty, gratitude and love, under which our relation to God has placed us. He is our Creator: He made us what we are: He has given us all that we possess: He upholds us in being: we depend on him, every moment, for all that we enjoy, and for all that we can hope for. Has he not a clear and absolute right to our service, our obedience, our gratitude, our love? Can any thing be so wicked, and so base, and so rebellious, as to refuse to obey and love him? Is he not worthy of our warmest affections, our highest esteem;—the consecration of all our powers, of all that we have and are, to his service and glory? Has he made us—not like the brutes—but more like the angels—capable of knowing, adoring, worshipping, and enjoying himself, to all eternity? And shall any of us prostitute these capacities to lower and baser objects? Shall we give them to his rivals and enemies? Shall we violate all the strong and tender ties, that bind us to a true allegiance—to a willing and delightful obedience—to the Sovereign of the universe? Shall we not rather commence at once the enjoyment of God, by holy communion with him, and a sweet surrender of our whole selves to his rightful demands? Shall we not thus begin a preparation for an eternal heaven, while we draw a present portion of it down to earth? I suggest to you, my dear young friends, some of my thoughts, in this questionary form. The questions carry with them their own answers: Or rather they are too full of import to be answered in words, or even in thought. We can never conceive, either of the folly and danger of having God for our enemy, or of the wisdom and happiness of making him our friend.

Do not, I entreat you, satisfy yourselves with mere speculations on the important subjects which I am bringing before you. Your attendance—your manifest diligent and serious attendance here—is indeed gratifying. But I cannot endure the thought, that your knowledge should be increased, and

that your hearts should remain unaffected—That would be only to increase your responsibility, and to aggravate your final condemnation. Let every subject we discuss be followed with serious, with devout meditation; with application to your hearts and consciences; with fervent prayer that it may be blessed to your everlasting benefit. So treat the subject of your attention this evening. Retire meditating on God; on yourselves, as the work and creatures of God; and on the indispensable duty that you owe him.—Go thus to your families and your closets; and there worship the God whose you are, and whom you ought to serve. Make him in Christ Jesus, your covenant God; that thus you may be prepared to dwell for ever in his immediate and blissful presence.—Amen.

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## LECTURE XII.

### *How did God create Man?*

THE subject of our present lecture is the tenth answer of our Catechism, expressed in these words: “God created man male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.”

1. God *created man*. I have already had occasion to treat of creation in *general*, and of the formation of the first parents of our race. But as the Catechism again resumes the subject in its *particular* relation to man, so this is exactly agreeable to what we find in the sacred records. The account of the other parts of creation is there cursory and general. The account of the creation of man is more full and particular. It was for man that the earth, and all which it contains, was formed. Of all terrestrial things, man alone can know and understand his origin, and adore the hand which gave him being. Of the origin of man therefore, more was to be told than merely that he was made. Indeed my young friends,

there is nothing which shows the dignity of your nature in the scale of being more strikingly, than the account which is given of this transaction in your Bible. When the world was formed and completely furnished for his residence, a council of the Godhead is held on the creation of man—"Let us make man." Man was to be God's viceroy in this lower world, the only image of his Creator in his moral perfections; and it was the purpose of God, though not then revealed, that the second person of the Godhead should become man; and hence the solemnity of the transaction, and of the account which is given of it—"Let us make man, in *our* image, after *our* likeness."—What can be the intention of this remarkable use of language in the plural number, on this occasion? We have already given some explanation of it. But let us examine it a little more closely.

There are only three ways of accounting for this manner of expression that deserve a serious attention; and indeed it is only the last of the three, that can have any thing that is even plausible said in its favour.

The first is, that the Deity is here represented as using the royal style, agreeably to what takes place in modern times, in which kings, or sovereigns, speak of themselves in the plural number. But Poole, in his Synopsis on the passage, quotes Aben Ezra, one of the most profound, learned, and candid, of all the Jewish Rabbies, as denying that this was ever the regal style among the Hebrews. He says that the regal style with them, was to use the second and third persons of the singular number—"Thou hast done it," in speaking to a king—"He hath done it," when a king spoke of himself. But he says there is not one example in the Jewish scriptures or writings, of a king or sovereign speaking in the first person plural—"let us do it"—or, "we will do it." This, one would suppose, should be conclusive on this point.

The second supposition is, that the Deity here addresses angels, or some other creatures, when he says, "let us make man." But this is monstrous in the extreme. Creation is the prerogative of God alone, as the scriptures abundantly

show; and “he will not give his glory to another.” To represent him as putting his creatures on a level with himself, and associating them with himself in the exercise of the divine prerogatives, seems to savour at once of the extravagance of folly and the extreme of impiety.

As the expression then is not a Hebraism, and cannot be accounted for on the hypothesis just mentioned, there is every reason to believe, with the current of the most judicious and pious commentators, that it is a direct reference to the Trinity of persons in the divine essence:—That they are here represented (to speak, as we are permitted to do, *after the manner of men*) as consulting and uniting in the formation of that intelligent being, by whom in the issue, the glory of the Triune God was to be so illustriously and widely displayed. How should every human being reverence himself, when he thinks of this origin! How should he feel himself bound, by the most sacred ties, to glorify God, in his body and his spirit which are God’s!

It may be proper to remark on the clause of the answer now under consideration, that the whole work of creation was completed on the sixth day. I notice this, because in the second chapter of Genesis, there is a particular account of the formation of woman, which seems to come in after the first Sabbath. This however is nothing more than a peculiarity of manner in the Hebrew writers.—They are often found first to record a series of facts, rapidly and shortly, and afterwards to take up one of the most important items, and consider it in detail.

2. God created man *male and female*. The sacred text informs us that “he called *them* Adam.” Here it may be proper to remark, that Hebrew proper names are all significative. Adam, in that language, denotes *earthy*; and both the man and woman were named *Adam* or *earthy*, to remind them of their original. Thus, after the fall, it was said—“dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return.” The circumstance that woman was formed out of man, and not immediately from the earth, did not render the declaration improper.

Their common *ultimate* origin, as to their bodies, was the earth,—their souls were immediately from God. Henry, in his commentary on the formation of woman, has a remark which, notwithstanding its quaintness, I have often admired for its justness and comprehension. It contains what some writers might have expanded to a volume, and yet not have said as much. “The woman (says Henry) was made of a rib out of the side of Adam: not made out of his head, to top him; not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him; but out of his side to be *equal* with him; under his arm, to be *protected*; and near his heart to be *beloved*.” The words *man* and *woman*, in the Hebrew language, differ in nothing, except in the feminine form of the latter term. This, it is believed, was intended to intimate that man and woman are not only of the same nature, but so to speak, the counterparts of each other. The name *Eve*, that is *Life*, was not given to our first mother till after the fall. It was then given by her husband Adam, doubtless, I think, by divine direction; because, says the sacred record, “she was”—i. e. was to be—“the mother of all living.” In this short reason, there is an intimation that the sentence of *death*, which had been incurred, was not to be forthwith executed; that the offending parties should not only live themselves, but according to the original benediction, should “increase and multiply and replenish the earth;” and that from Eve should descend the promised Messiah, emphatically denominated, for an additional reason, “the seed of the woman;” in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed, and all his people obtain a *life* which should be eternal.

The sexes having a common origin, were formed to promote the happiness of each other. The true relation of the sexes, is most beautifully and justly described by Milton—

“Two of far nobler shape, erect and tall,  
Godlike erect, with native honour clad,  
In naked\* majesty seemed lords of all,

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\* “ Why should our garments, made to hide  
Our parents’ shame, provoke our pride ?

And worthy seemed; for in their looks divine  
 The image of their glorious Maker shone,  
 Truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure,  
 (Severe, but in true filial freedom placed)  
 Whence true authority in men; tho' both  
 Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;  
 For contemplation he and valour formed,  
 For softness she and sweet attractive grace;  
 He for God only, she for God in him—

\* \* \* \* \*

So hand in hand they passed, the loveliest pair  
 That ever since in love's embraces met;  
 Adam the goodliest man of men since born  
 His sons, the fairest of her daughters Eve."

The sacred institution of marriage was formed in Paradise itself: and here again Milton shall be your instructor—

"Hail wedded love, mysterious law, true source  
 Of human offspring, sole propriety  
 In Paradise, of all things common else.  
 By thee adul'trous lust was driv'n from men  
 Among the bestial herds to range; by thee,  
 Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure,  
 Relations dear, and all the charities  
 Of father, son, and brother, first were known."

In their original formation there was one man and one woman. That this was intended to denote, from the equality of the sexes, that to the end of time, the marriage relation should subsist only between two persons, one of each sex, there can be no reasonable doubt. Our Lord himself plainly intimates this, in his prohibition of capricious divorce; though his main object in that prohibition was to forbid such a divorce. Polygamy is indeed of ancient origin, and is at this day prevalent, among those nations of the eastern world that are not Christian. Yet the most ancient records, both sacred and pro-

The art of dress did ne'er begin,  
 Till Eve our mother learn'd to sin.

When first she put that cov'ring on,  
 Her robe of innocence was gone:  
 And yet her children vainly boast  
 In the sad marks of glory lost."

WATTS.

fane, represent the original state of things to have been, the union for life of one man and one woman. Goquet, in his origin of laws, fully establishes this point; and the remarkable equality of the sexes in all ages, shows that this must be the law of nature.

Some modern travellers indeed, have maintained that this equality is not found in the eastern countries. They affirm that the females there, are to the males in certain places, as three or four to one. For myself, I much suspect that this account, if not wholly fabulous, is greatly exaggerated. It certainly requires much more confirmation than it has ever yet received. But on the supposition of its truth, I should think it would afford the strongest of all evidence of the ill effects of polygamy; because, as this was not the original state of things, and certainly does not take place where polygamy is not practised, there would be every reason to believe that this unhappy inequality itself had *originated* from polygamy, and ought to be prevented by removing its cause. The existence of polygamy among the ancient patriarchs is no evidence of its lawfulness. It is no where warranted in scripture, but only tolerated as an inveterate evil, which was permitted to remain during an imperfect dispensation.

In European and Christian nations, the small inequality which really exists, is found in the greater number of males than females. The males are to the females as 13 to 12, or perhaps, more accurately, as 20 to 19. The small surplusage of the male sex, it has been justly observed, seems intended to supply the greater waste of that sex by war, and by other hazardous occupations. This equality of the sexes in all ages, is one of the most striking proofs and examples of that particular providence, which is constantly extended to all the works of the great Creator.

3. God created man *after his own image*. Man in his bodily organization, particularly in his erect form, is different from the inferior animals. This has been the theme of song with the heathen poets.\* When it is said however, that man

\* *Os homoni sublime dedid.*" &c.—OVID, MET.

was created in the image of God, there is probably no reference whatever, either figurative or literal, to his bodily form. We are forbidden even to imagine a resemblance between the Creator and any modification of matter whatsoever. Man's being made in the image of God therefore, must refer entirely to the *incorporeal* part of our nature. (1.) The soul of man is a *spiritual* being. In this it resembles his Maker, who is a pure and infinite spirit. The intellectual part of man is indeed to the infinite intelligence of God, but as a ray or particle of light to the sun. But as every beam of light bears a resemblance to the sun, so does every human soul bear a spiritual resemblance to its Creator.

(2.) The soul of man is *immortal*. It will never die.—Look forward to a period as distant in futurity as your imaginations can carry you. Over the whole space which divides that period from the present moment, each of your souls will actually pass: and when there arrived, an eternity will be still before you—You will only have entered upon it. Each of you has commenced a course of being that is strictly endless. You cannot terminate your own existence; nor can any other created being extinguish it. God formed the human soul to endure, from its creation, as long as himself. In this respect man is formed in the image of his Maker.

(3.) As man resembles his Creator in the *nature* of his soul, so he also does in its *exercises or acts*. Mere matter is incapable of intelligence; and the mere animal creation want the endowments of reason and judgment. Man can reason, compare, and judge; he can will, choose and refuse; he is capable of great, probably of an endless, progression or improvement in knowledge. In these intellectual endowments and exercises, he bears some resemblance to the great fountain of wisdom and intellectual excellence.

(4.) And chiefly—Man, in his original formation, bore the likeness of his Maker, in his *moral powers*. In these he was, in his measure, the image of his God. But on this most important point the Catechism specifies particulars, to which

we shall shortly come in course. At present we proceed to notice—

4. That God *created* man in *knowledge*. Among the other absurdities which attend all the infidel schemes of accounting for the origin of man, is that which relates to knowledge. They represent the race as having originated in such a state of perfect ignorance—as beginning from such a degraded origin (little if at all superior to the brutes), that it is impossible to tell on their hypothesis, how the race was ever *preserved*; to say nothing of its rising to its present state of improvement. Man in infancy is more helpless, and longer helpless, than any mere animal. He requires instruction for every thing—even in the choice of his food, and how to distinguish that which is wholesome from that which is poisonous and destructive; and how to protect himself against the inconveniences of the elements and seasons. On the supposition that a number of men had been formed, as destitute of information as many of these fanciful hypotheses suppose, there is every reason to conclude that the whole race would have become extinct, before it had reached to a second generation.

Revelation informs us that man was created in *knowledge*. He was informed and instructed by his Creator. As he was intended for *improvement*, and this improvement to arise from the exercise of his powers, I cannot adopt the opinion of some estimable writers, that the knowledge conveyed to him by information, in regard to *natural subjects*, was of the most extensive kind. But something he needed for the preservation of his being, and something more, as the elements or materials for after improvement; and all this, we have no reason to doubt, was communicated. He was taught how to select his food, and to preserve himself from danger and inconvenience; he was informed of the powers and design of his own nature, and the nature, properties, and powers of the inferior creatures. That Adam gave names to these creatures we are expressly informed; and they were names (for so the original text imports) that were expressive of the *natures* of these creatures severally.

But the knowledge of the most importance which was communicated to our first parents, was of a spiritual kind. Of his Creator there is no cause to doubt that the first man, before his fall, had higher and juster conceptions, than have been possessed, on this side the grave, by any of his offspring. Before the human mind was darkened and debased by sin, man we must suppose had the most sublime and delightful conceptions of God, and intercourse with him. He was also instructed in the *will* of God. He knew that abstinence from the tree of knowledge was the test of his obedience. He knew that death was to be the consequence of sin, and that immortal felicity was to be the reward of obedience. He knew that he was in a state of trial, and that if he passed it successfully, he would exchange it for a state of safety, as well as of reward. He knew that he was the head and representative of all his posterity; and that they were to share with him in all the consequences, either of fidelity or of defection. All this I think we are warranted to say, by the clear light of revelation.

5. Man was created in *righteousness*. This was not an imputed righteousness. Sinless man did not need this. His righteousness, at his first formation, was altogether personal and inherent. It consisted in a perfect conformity of all the powers and faculties of his soul to the pure nature of God, and to the moral law which was written on his heart. His understanding was most delightfully employed on the divine perfections; and on the will, the government, and the works of the great Creator. His will followed, most readily and delightfully, all the dictates of his understanding, and most cordially chose and preferred all that God required. His affections were set, in due proportion, on every lawful object, and had no tendency to fix on any thing unlawful. He loved what God loved, and was averse from all that God prohibited.

6. It is added that man was created in *holiness*. It is not easy to show in what this consisted, as distinct from the righteousness just mentioned. Fisher, in his catechism, says it consisted in “the lustre and beauty of his perfect knowledge

and inherent righteousness; shining both in his heart and life." And truly, my children, there must appear to every contemplative mind, a moral beauty in the whole character and state of innocent, holy man, which it is most delightful to contemplate. God and holy angels did behold it with approbation, and Satan with hellish envy and malignity.

7. God gave to man *dominion over the creatures*. Before the fall these were all harmless, and man was authorized to use them for his convenience and pleasure. None of them would ever have rebelled against man, or been disposed in any way to annoy or injure him, but for sin. Nor is there reason to believe that the inferior animals would ever have been used for food, if man had retained his innocence. Probably indeed, they were not used for food, till after the general deluge; since then an express permission was given by God to Noah and his descendants, to use them for this purpose. Their first use by man, subsequently to the fall, seems to have been for sacrifice. Probably the beasts with whose skins Adam and Eve were clothed, after their apostacy, had been offered in sacrifice. That bestial sacrifice constituted the acceptable offering of righteous Abel, we are distinctly told.—Thus early was typified, that great atoning sacrifice of the Son of God, by which alone fallen man is, or can be, restored to the favour of his Maker.

The inferior animals, in various ways, feel the effects of man's transgression. This is a subject both curious and difficult, into which we cannot now enter,—it may hereafter claim some attention. We have seen that we have the divine permission to use the inferior animals for food. We have also a right to avail ourselves of the strength and labour of such of them as can be employed, to diminish or assist the toil of man. But all mere sporting with the lives or feelings of any of these animals—the infliction upon them of unnecessary pain or suffering, either while they live, or when we take their lives—all this is unwarranted by our common Creator—It is wanton, wicked cruelty, contrary to God's revealed will, and to every dictate of humanity. It ought to

be remembered, that in the fourth commandment, provision is made for the rest of labouring beasts, as well as of man; and I have dwelt a short time on this topick, although it has carried me a little beyond the answer, because I think it is far less regarded than it ought to be; and because the cultivation of humane and tender feelings toward the brute creation, is very important to youth—connected far more intimately, I am perswaded, with moral sensibility and moral obligations, than is generally supposed.

On a review of what has been said on the subject before us, let us—

1. Think for a moment on the *original* state of man, compared with the state in which he has been found ever since his fall. In his primitive state, his body was incapable of disease, and of dissolution. It was formed for unwasting vigour and immortal duration. When death is called *the law of our nature*, it must be understood only of our *fallen nature*. For if man had remained in innocence, death would have been unknown. In innocence too, as we have already remarked, the faculties of his mind were all perfect, rightly balanced, and entirely harmonious; all holy, and sweetly employed in the love, service, obedience, and enjoyment of the great Creator. But alas! “the crown is fallen from our head—the gold has become dim, and the fine gold is changed.” What ravages have been made by sin, on this master-piece of the six days’ work of God on earth! Man is now subject to poverty, pain, disease, and death. His mental powers are even in worse disorder than those of his bodily frame. His passions, no longer subject to his reason and understanding, hurry him into every excess. His animal appetites often domineer over all the higher powers of his nature. He is corrupt and polluted throughout, by a deep moral contamination. In his natural state, he is, in the strong language of scripture, “dead in trespasses and sins,” and “a child of wrath.”

But 2d—The design of the redemption by Christ is, to restore to man the moral image of his God, which he lost by the fall. Christ Jesus, as the second Adam, repairs the ruins

of the first. He not only reconciles man to his offended Maker, but in the very process of this reconciliation, his Holy Spirit begins a work in the human soul, which, when completed, will render man as pure and sinless as our first parents were, in their holiest and happiest state. This is the real design and the true tendency of the gospel dispensation: and this is its ultimate and certain effect, in every instance in which it is applied agreeably to its design. In every instance in which a redeemed sinner becomes vitally united to the Lord Jesus Christ, he becomes a certain candidate for a state of dignity, purity, intelligence, and happiness, not only as great as Adam enjoyed in Eden, but far greater: for the glory, knowledge, and felicity, of the heavenly world, are certainly much greater than were, or could be, enjoyed in the terrestrial paradise.

Now my dear youth, since such is the design, and such the certain effect of the gospel when cordially embraced, say if it is not passing strange, that men should so generally reject it—Oh! is it not mournful, is it not affecting, is it not to the last degree distressing, that we cannot prevail on lost, ruined, defiled, perishing sinners, to be completely restored!—to embrace God's merciful method of delivering them from their ruined condition—of reversing it completely, and making them the companions of angels. And will any of you do this? Ah! you have done it. And will any of you continue to do it?—continue a course which will consign you to hopeless sinning, and sorrowing, and suffering, with the first infernal tempter, and with all whose ruin he has since effected.

Could I lead you from this house into the paradise and the felicity from which our first parents were banished, would you not be willing to follow me? Could I tell you that, in the suburbs of this city, God had opened anew the garden of Eden, and had sent me here this evening to conduct into it all who would consent to go—which of you, crediting the statement, would refuse to go? Would *any*—would *one* refuse? What will you say then, when I tell you most truly, that I

am here this hour, authorized by God, to make you a better offer?—to invite you to a better paradise than ever bloomed in Eden. Yes, I am here under the commission of the ascending Saviour—“ Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.” How awful is the alternative stated in the commission itself! But dear youth, there is no other—verily there is no other. You cannot say, and make it good, that you will *have nothing to do* either with the salvation or with the damnation, which is mentioned in this commission of Christ Jesus to his ministers. You must have to do with this alternative. You cannot avoid it. You must choose on the one side or the other. If you say you will not, that saying itself *makes the choice*. Yes, that saying is the awful choice of the *bad part* of the alternative. It is the choice, whether you will or not, of damnation. “ He that **BELIEVETH NOT** shall be damned.” You must not—deliberately you cannot, so choose. Come then, listen to the voice of God’s mercy in the gospel. Listen to it without delay; listen to it this evening, this hour, this moment. From the seats on which you now sit, send up a devout and fervent aspiration to God, to enable you immediately to begin to live for heaven. In God’s strength, resolve that you will do so. Resolve and pray, and pray and resolve, at every step—Then God will assuredly help you. You will be led in the way everlasting—Your minds will be enlightened; your hearts will be softened and subdued; you will be filled with genuine sorrow for sin; you will become true penitents; you will be led to the Saviour; you will make him your all in all; you will be changed, in your measure, into his likeness; you will possess something of his spirit and temper; you will follow his example: and by him you will be conducted safely through life and through death; and then you will rise to the paradise above, and live, and reign, and rejoice, with him for ever and ever. Amen.

## LECTURE XIII.

*What are God's works of Providence?*

THE eleventh answer of our catechism is—"God's works of providence are his most holy, wise and powerful, preserving and governing, all his creatures and all their actions."

In discussing this subject, we shall, as heretofore, pay a particular regard to the several clauses in the answer recited; yet we shall not take them in the exact order, in which they are there placed. Our method will be—

I. To show the nature, and prove the existence of the divine Providence—It consists in preserving and governing the whole creation.

II. To consider the extent and operations of this providence—It reaches to all the creatures of God, and to all their actions.

III. To dwell a little on the character of this providence—It is most holy, wise and powerful.

IV. To make a few miscellaneous remarks, chiefly of a practical kind, on the whole subject.

I. Then, I am to show the nature, and prove the existence, of the divine Providence—It consists in preserving and governing the creation.

It has been ably argued by some excellent writers, that the preservation of the universe is a continued exercise of creative power. Their supposition seems to be, that creature existence is a kind of *forced state*—that as matter rose out of existence at the command of the Deity, so it would fall back, or return to non-existence, if not constantly sustained in being, by the very same power or energy which first produced it:—In a word, that preservation is equivalent to a constant creation. They suppose that this theory is, at least, countenanced by scripture. Thus, in the first chapter of the

epistle to the Hebrews, the inspired writer connects together the creation of the worlds by the Son of God, and his “upholding all things by the word of his power,”—and in such manner, it is supposed, as to represent the latter as a continuance of the former act.

But whether providence or preservation imply a constant creation or not, it seems plain that there must be a continual exertion of divine power, in order to those movements and operations which constantly take place in the material world. Matter is of itself *inert*. This is always considered as one of its essential properties. Yet it moves incessantly, and is continually receiving innumerable new modifications, or changes of form. The established order in which this takes place, we call the *laws of nature*. But what do we understand by the laws of nature? I have heretofore observed, that if we do not understand by this expression *the will and agency of the Creator*, it will be hard to affix any determinate meaning to the words. The laws of nature must, *ultimately*, be nothing else than that known and settled order of the divine agency, in which he immediately operates, or exerts his power, on the material world. Thus the laws of gravitation, and the laws of the various other kinds of attraction—of magnetism, of electricity, of cohesion, of aggregation, and of the numerous chemical affinities—set bounds to our knowledge, in regard to the motion of matter, from causes apparently inherent in itself. We know that it uniformly moves in these ways, which we call its laws. But we know no more. We perceive not the proximate cause of these motions. Possibly there are several causes, nearer than any yet known, to the first cause. But suppose that there are, and that several of these still hidden causes should be discovered, the ultimate first cause must, after all, be the will and agency of the Deity. His agency, extended throughout the whole material world, directing and guiding all its movements and modifications, and throughout the whole sentient world, sustaining and governing it, and providing for the propagation and continuance of all animated nature—is what we mean, in

general, by the providence of God. That the divine Providence really produces these effects, is a part of natural religion; and is almost as well laid down and illustrated by some of the heathen moralists, as by any other uninspired writers. To suppose that the wonderful revolution of the heavenly bodies, the succession of the seasons, the products of the earth, the principle of life in animals, and the preservation of every function of the animal economy in its proper office—to suppose that all this is the effect, either of chance, or of any principle *in* matter, considered by itself, is as contrary to reason and sound philosophy, as it is to scripture—We have no evidence of the fact, and all analogy is against it. To the eye of contemplative and sober reason, willing to discern its Creator, *a present God* is recognised in all that we behold. “In him we live, and move, and have our being.” “No words (says Doddridge) can better than these, express that *continual and necessary dependance* of all derived things, in their existence, and in all their operations, on their *first and almighty cause*, which the truest *philosophy*, as well as *theology*, teaches.” St. Paul in using these words, addressed to the Athenians, referred to one of their own poets: and if the heathen notion that God is the *anima mundi*, or soul of the world, had implied no more than this, the notion would have been just.

Divine revelation is full of the doctrine we inculcate. The wonderful “order and harmony among such a vast variety of creatures in the world, continuing for so many ages, notwithstanding their different and opposite natures; the orderly return of seed time and harvest; the rise and fall, and revolutions of kingdoms; the accomplishment of future events, exactly according to the prediction of them long before; and the preservation of a church on earth, in opposition to all the powers of darkness, and the malice and efforts of wicked men”—these the sacred scriptures teach us to consider, as evidences of the existence of a superintending Providence: And whoever considers them attentively, cannot fail to see in them, the truth of this important doctrine of religion. The civ. Psalm contains throughout, a most sublime and impres-

sive description, both of the creating power and constant superintending providence, of Jehovah. We proceed to consider—

II. The extent and operations of the divine providence—It reaches to all the creatures of God, and to all their actions.

There are not a few who readily admit what they call *a general providence*, but deny that which is *particular*. They admit that God governs the world by general laws, and yet will by no means admit that his agency—scarcely that his notice—extends to minute events and occurrences. They seem to suppose that it is unworthy of God, to take such a notice of inconsiderable objects. But alas! these objectors to a particular providence, are the very men who think unworthily of God; and who *speak* most unworthily of him, when they represent him as unattentive to the least of his creatures, or to their concerns. It does indeed require a painful effort, and it is esteemed a degrading employment, for men to attend, in detail, to minute concerns. But the very *perfection* of the Deity consists in his being able, with perfect ease, to order all the concerns of his boundless dominions. To him indeed no creature can be considered as either great or small; because to an infinite being, all finite things are as nothing. Yes, all our comparisons and proportions, sink to nothing before the infinite God—

“To Him no high, no low, no great, no small,  
He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.

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He sees with equal eye, as God of all,

A hero perish, or a sparrow fall;

Atoms, or systems, into ruin hurl'd,

And now a bubble burst, and now a world.”

On the doctrine of a particular providence, the scripture is very explicit. Our blessed Saviour taught it, in the most impressive manner, to his disciples. He taught that “the very hairs of our head are all numbered;” that “a sparrow falleth not to the ground without our heavenly Father.” Yes, my young friends, you are to consider your sex, your situation in life, your endowments of body and mind, your pros-

pects of wealth or of want, every event that has befallen you, all the mercies and all the chastisements that you have ever received, all your preservations from death and danger, all your Christian privileges and all your hopes for eternity—all, all, are to be considered, as having been meted out to you, by the God of providence. To him you are to be thankful for your mercies; to him you are implicitly to submit under all afflictions; to him you are to look in all your necessities; and to him you are permitted and invited to flee for refuge, in all your dangers and distresses—Against him you are never to murmur, for he doth all things well: and, if it be not your own fault, all that God orders for you, will turn out for your happiness in the end.

In considering the extent and operations of divine providence, we meet with the very same difficulty, as in considering the decrees of God. This, indeed, is only a continued or varied view of that subject. It is by his providence that God executes his decrees. His providence, without interfering with the freedom of man, or in the least diminishing his responsibility, does certainly extend to all creatures, and to all their actions. The sun never shone on another deed so tremendously impious, as the crucifixion of our blessed Redeemer. Yet hear what is said of this,—Acts ii. 23—“Him, being delivered by *the determinate counsel, and foreknowledge of God*, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”—Again, in the 4th chapter—“For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together; for *to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.*” Here this voluntary, awful, guilty act, is said to be “by the determinate counsel, foreknowledge, and hand of God.” We do assuredly know, that God does, in no sense or degree, lead men into sin. The apostle James warns us on this subject.—“Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, *neither tempteth he any man.* But every man is tempted,

when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed." Here you perceive distinctly, the two principles so repeatedly noticed by us of late—The wicked, fulfilling the purpose and providence of God, and yet acting with perfect freedom, and with all the guilt of their actions on their own heads. Now although as we have shown, that this is, as to the manner of it, inexplicable by us at present, yet it is surely comfortable to know, that all wicked beings are in the hand of a good, righteous, and holy God; that, as in the case of Job, they can go no farther than he permits; and that he will make the wrath of men to praise him, and restrain its remainder.

One other important idea to be noticed in this division of our subject is, that there is no such thing under the divine government, or providence, as real *chance* or *accident*. What is so called by us, and what, in conformity with our habits or modes of expression, is so called in one instance, in holy scripture, where it is said that "time and chance happen to all," is still directed with as much certainty, by the providence of God, as any events whatsoever. Nothing can be more a matter of chance than a lot. Yet of this it is explicitly declared—"The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." This, surely, is a most cheering doctrine. What could be more gloomy, than to believe that our dearest interests, even life itself, might lie at the mercy of blind or misguided chance? On the contrary, how consoling to know, that nothing can befall us, nothing injure us, without the direction, or permission, of our heavenly Father. We are now—

III. To consider the character of the divine providence;—that it is most holy, wise, and powerful.

1. It is most holy. All the providential acts or dispensations of God, are, like himself, perfectly righteous, equitable, just and good. This, as a general truth, we have just now noticed. But I wish in this place to direct your attention particularly, to some appearances that seem hostile to this truth. In every age of the world, there have been a number of providential dispensations, both in regard to communities

and individuals, which to human view have seemed difficult to reconcile with equity and goodness. Some of these dispensations, have appeared to be in violation of all that was just and right. The wicked and oppressive have seemed to be smiled upon and prospered, and the good and deserving, to be frowned upon and made to suffer. It was this that proved so sore a temptation to St. Asaph, as may be seen in the 73d Psalm. *We* ought to solve this difficulty or temptation as Asaph did, by calling to mind that the *present* is a state of *probation*, and not of *reward*—That God will eternally bless his people in a better world, and make all their sufferings increase their future happiness; while the wicked shall be punished for all their wickedness, and especially for the abuse of their prosperity. It has been well observed, on this subject—“that God sometimes punishes the wicked in a signal manner, in the present life, to show that there *is a providence*; and sometimes permits them to go wholly unpunished, to show that *there must be a future state.*”

It should however be noted here, that adverse providences are sometimes wonderfully reversed and overruled for good, even in the present life. We know that it is recorded of Job—the greatest merely human sufferer, of which we have an account in sacred story—that “the Lord blessed the latter end of Job, more than the beginning.” And thousands in every age have borne testimony to the truth, that crosses and disappointments for a season, have been the means of lasting prosperity and happiness afterwards; while on the contrary, temporary success, or gratification, has proved in the end the greatest and most lasting calamity. This topick has been most strikingly illustrated, even by a heathen poet. The tenth Satire of Juvenal—so admirably imitated or parodied, by Dr. Johnson—is the work to which I refer, and which I recommend to your perusal.

Sometimes too, it should be observed, the apparently inequitable dispensation takes its whole aspect simply from *our ignorance*—our ignorance of certain facts, which if we had known, we should have seen the greatest propriety and beauty

in the whole procedure. Many fables or analogues have been invented to illustrate this point. That of Parnel is excellent. The following, by Mr. Addison, is I think striking. It is, as well as I remember, to this effect—He says that the Jews have a legend, that during the forty days which Moses spent in Mount Horeb, he was permitted to propose some inquiries, in regard to the darkness of God's providential dispensations. He was commanded to look to the foot of the mount. He did so, and saw a fountain of water, at which a soldier was alighting from his horse to drink. In remounting, the soldier unknowingly dropt a purse of money, which, a few minutes after he was gone, a child picked up, and carried away in haste. Scarcely was the child out of sight, when an old man, bending under the weight of years, and weary with travelling, sat down to refresh himself, on the brink of the fountain. In the mean time, the soldier, having missed his purse, returns in search of it—suspects the old man of having found and concealed it, and insists on his restoring it. The old man protests that he has not seen it, and in the most solemn manner appeals to God, as the witness of his innocence. But the soldier disbelieving him, kills him on the spot. Moses is shocked, and inquires where is the equity of this dispensation of providence! The answer was—The child is indeed the cause of the old man's death; but know thou, that this old man was the murderer of that child's father.

After all, there are some dispensations of providence so dark, that perhaps we can scarcely conceive how the equity of them can be made out, except that we do certainly know that God can, and will, correct in a future state, all the inequalities and apparently inequitable allotments of the present. These dark dispensations are no doubt intended to be *trials of the faith and patience of God's people*, in their passage through the world. Whenever his providential dealings seem to be contrary to his word—*seem*, I say, for they never are *really* contrary—it is the office and the excellence of faith, to trust and cleave to the divine word, in opposition to all appearances. This it was that gave its peculiar value to Abraham's faith.

We have no reason to doubt that it will constitute a part of the happiness of heaven, to have all dark providences fully cleared up; and to be able to see the equity and goodness, yea the kindness and mercy, of all that here was obscure, and perplexing, and hard to be borne.

2. Another character of God's providence is, that it is *wise*. On this it will not be necessary to dwell long, since it is implied in what has already been said, and is, in general, exceedingly obvious. Wherever we turn our eyes—whether to the heavens, to the earth, or to ourselves—we see at once the wisdom of our Maker and Preserver. It is strikingly apparent, not only in the original structure of what we behold, but in the wonderful manner in which every process and operation is carried on and continued, and in which the wants of every living thing are consulted, provided for and supplied—Or if we examine the moral world, the same wisdom is not less conspicuous. Good is brought out of evil, light out of darkness, and order out of confusion. The jarring passions, views, interests, and pursuits of men, are so overruled and directed, as to be made to issue invariably, in the accomplishment of the designs of heaven.

3. The providence of God is *powerful*. “He doth according to his will, in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?” How often do we see the greatest events growing out of the most inconsiderable beginnings, or brought about by what would have appeared to us the most inadequate means and instruments? In the striking language of ancient prophecy—“Worm Jacob is made to thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff.” From what small beginnings did the Christian religion proceed, which is now filling the world? How few events have been productive of such great changes, of almost every description, as the Protestant reformation? Yet this reformation was chiefly effected by the instrumentality of an obscure Augustinian monk—for such was Martin Luther, when he commenced the great and glorious work, which he was preserved

and honoured to accomplish. On the other hand, the best concerted plans, and the most powerful preparations of earthly princes, have been often turned to confusion and brought to destruction, by causes which were overlooked or despised. Whom God will protect, none can injure. Whom God will destroy, none can save. "If God be for us, who can be against us!"

IV. I am now to make a few miscellaneous remarks, chiefly of a practical kind, on the subject before us.

1. You will sometimes, it is probable, meet with a distinction made, between *ordinary* and *extraordinary providences*. By ordinary providences, you are to understand those occurrences which take place agreeably to the established laws of nature. By extraordinary providences, miracles are usually intended—This, indeed, is their proper character. It required no more power to make the sun stand still, in the time of Joshua, than is required to make it rise and set daily—The latter is only ordinary, the former was extraordinary.

Another distinction is sometimes made, between *common* and *special providences*. By common providences are usually understood, such events as we are accustomed to expect and experience, in the established use of means. By special providences, such as seem to take place without means, or in opposition to means, or in a manner different from what usually takes place in similar circumstances. It is a common providence, when health is preserved by wholesome diet, temperance, exercise, and the avoidance of contagion. But when a man lives in health, from day to day and month to month, in the midst of pestilence and death, this is by a special providence. Special providences ought always to be noted with care, and acknowledged with peculiar gratitude to God. But it is presumption to act on the *expectation* that a special providence will be exercised for our preservation. Such dispensations must be wholly left to the award of a sovereign God. It is only the divine blessing on the ordinary use of means, on which we can lawfully calculate.

2. Sometimes in God's providential dealings, a crime is as

it were distinctly written in its punishment—the offender is punished *in kind*; he is taken in his own toils; he is en-snared and corrected, or destroyed, by his own wiles ; his “ violent dealings come down upon his own pate.” Individuals may best judge of this, in regard to the divine dealings with themselves ; but it is not often that we should attempt to judge of them in the case of others—Some strongly marked cases, there may indeed be. But we are taught in Scripture carefully to abstain from all rash judgments, in the way of inferring crime from suffering. This was the error of the friends of holy Job, who were eventually reproved, while he was acquitted. Our Lord pointedly reprehended it with reference to the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, and to those on whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them. We know not what may be the designs of God, in the particular afflictions or chastisements of our brethren. It may be, that he is intending—what certainly we ought to wish—to prepare them, in the school of adversity, to be partakers at last of his special favours.

3. A truly devout Christian will often see remarkable answers to his prayers, in providential occurrences which relate to himself and others. This we are clearly and impressively taught in scripture, in various places ; especially by the apostle James, where he refers to the example of Elijah, and assures us that “ the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” What the scriptures teach on this subject, christian experience abundantly confirms. Sometimes the answer to prayer is so distinct, so speedy, and so merciful, as to astonish the believing suppliant—to fill his heart with gratitude and his lips with praise. We are not however to reckon on these speedy and distinctly marked answers to prayer; but leave it with God, to answer in the time and way which to Him may seem best.

“ Still raise for good, the supplicating voice,  
But leave to heaven, the measure and the choice.”

It is our duty however in all cases, to follow our prayers

with expectation; to mark their answer, and be thankful for it when it is received.

Hence I remark—

4. Observation on the course of providence, is calculated to make a wise, as well as a pious man. Indeed the course of providence, is but another name for the course of human affairs. He who carefully observes what has usually taken place in the affairs of men, may commonly foresee and foretell what, in like circumstances, will again take place: and he who has a belief in the providence of God, will of course attribute all to him; and when special or remarkable providences occur, the finger of God will be seen and acknowledged in them all. It was among the many excellent traits in the character of the father of our country, the illustrious Washington, that he observed, and often acknowledged publicly and distinctly, the special providences of God, which were so often apparent in the early periods of our history as a nation. And I will take this opportunity to remark to you, that history—profane as well as sacred,—incontestably demonstrates, that the frowns of Heaven have often remarkably rested on those generals and statesmen, who did not acknowledge the providence of God and their dependence on him; and that his smiles have usually attended those who did recognise his providence, and look to him to order their affairs in mercy. But pious Christians, however humble in their lot, will, as they grow in grace, grow especially in their attention to the providence of God, as it relates both to themselves and others. They will learn much, and be comforted greatly by observing it. The remark of the pious Flavel, is worthy of remembrance—"that those who carefully observe favourable providences, shall have such providences to observe."

5. Finally—Remember my young friends, that a sanctified providence is assured, to all those who truly love and serve God. "We know," says an inspired apostle, "that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." As therefore you are now in the morning of life, let it be your first and

great concern, to make the God of providence your friend. In this you will find a comfort and a support, which can be derived from no other source. To see a father's hand in the whole ordering of your lot in life—even in your severest trials and sorest afflictions—what can be so well calculated as this, to soothe and satisfy the mind; to make it rejoice in tribulation, and to give a double relish to the sweets of prosperity itself? Let not a day of life ever pass, in which you do not devoutly and solemnly “commit your way unto God,” beseeching him “to direct your path.” Implore fervently the smiles and blessing of God, on all the labour of your hands; on all your plans; on all your pursuits; on all in which you engage. Engage in nothing in which you cannot, with humble confidence, look up to God to be with you and bless you in it. Go to no place, and partake in no amusement, in which you cannot ask for God's presence, protection and blessing, to attend you. This is an excellent rule of action. Keep constantly in mind that your life is in the hand of God; and endeavour so to live from day to day, that death may not overtake you by surprise; but may be welcomed, whenever sent, as the messenger who is to announce, that your Father in heaven demands your presence *there*. Amen.

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## LECTURE XIV.

*What special act of Providence did God exercise toward Man in the state wherein he was created?*

THE subject of the present lecture is thus expressed in our catechism—“When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death.”

As it is my wish in this course of lectures, to touch, at least cursorily, on as many topicks as I properly can, a know-

ledge of which may be of use in the study of the scripture, I shall here say a few words on the garden of Eden.—It is proper to take notice of it here, if we notice it at all.

Few subjects have given rise to more fanciful speculations, than the question *where* the garden of Eden was situated. It appears to have been the intention of Moses to mark out the place—the general deluge notwithstanding—in such manner that his contemporaries might know distinctly its location. But the face of the earth has since been so changed by a variety of causes, that it is not possible to find any place at present, which fully answers to the Mosaick description. In the land of Chaldea, we find the names of two of the four rivers, which Moses mentions as having their source in the garden of Eden—These are the Euphrates and the Hiddekel, or Tigris. At some distance below the conflux of these two rivers, and not far from the head of what is now called the Persian Gulf, we may, I think, with the most probability, fix the site of the garden of Eden. A little below this site, the stream formed by the junction of the Euphrates and Hiddekel is again parted; and the eastern branch may have been the Gihon, and the western the Pison of Moses.

The garden of Eden, in its primitive state, was a place of exquisite beauty, and calculated for affording every kind of pleasure and enjoyment to sinless man. It is sometimes called Paradise—the Greek term for a garden or enclosure; borrowed it is supposed from the Persian, and which, in the New Testament, is sometimes used to denote the heavenly state itself.

The terrestrial Paradise produced all manner of pleasant fruit; and the business of our first parents was, to dress and keep this garden. It is worthy of your notice and remembrance, that even in a state of innocence man was formed for *industry*, and not for idleness. The garden indeed produced its fruit spontaneously—to till the ground, in order to obtain its increase, was a part of the curse inflicted for transgression. But to preserve and dress the garden, so as to keep it in its

pristine order and beauty, and to gather its fruit, was the employment of man in innocence.

In this garden there were two remarkable trees,—the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. These have been considered as the two sacraments, appointed for man before his fall—the seals of the covenant of works; the one to be received, the other to be avoided. Their nature we shall more particularly explain in the sequel.

Let us now proceed to consider the first clause in the answer of the catechism—“When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him.”

The Hebrew word ברית (Berith,) and the Greek Διαθήκη (Diathēke,) which very often occur in the holy scriptures, and of which I have heretofore taken some notice, are, by our translators, commonly rendered by the English word *covenant*. This word, however, in the scriptural sense of it, is not exactly the same which it bears in secular transactions. A covenant among men, has been defined—“A mutual, free compact and agreement, betwixt two parties, upon express terms or conditions.” Notwithstanding, however, the infinite distance between God and man, it appears that our Creator has always treated with our race in the way of covenant. It is indeed true, that the mere will of God when made known to man, must be a law to him—whether he approve or disapprove of that will. But although from the infinite perfection and goodness of God, we know that he would never require of man any thing but what was perfectly reasonable and right, yet we find that in fact he has been pleased to take the consent of man to his equitable proposals; that man might be bound, not only by abstract duty and authority, but also by his own consent and stipulation.

The Mosaick account of what was done in constituting the original moral state of man is very short; and much has been written and said, in a controversy whether it was properly a covenant transaction, or not. But by comparing the statement made by Moses with other parts of the sacred writings, it appears that, so far as any transaction between the Creator

and the creature can properly be called a covenant, this certainly was one. In covenant transactions among men, the parties indeed must be both free and equal; and in this respect, as already hinted, the sense of the term *covenant*, in the dealings of God with his creatures, must be somewhat different from its import in regard to their dealings with each other. Yet all the substantial parts of a covenant are manifestly found in the case before us. Infinitely holy, just, and good, it was impossible that the Creator should propose to Adam any thing that was not in the highest degree equitable: And while Adam was perfectly holy, it was in like manner impossible that he should not freely choose, and entirely approve of the equitable proposal of his Maker; and bind himself to obedience by every obligation or sanction that was required. This was accordingly done; and thus a covenant was formed between God and man, in a state of innocence.

This is called in the catechism “a covenant of life.” It is also often called, *the covenant of works*, from the *condition* of it—which was *obedience* or *works*. Man in all he did, or in all his works, was to obey his Maker. It is called the covenant of life, because life—eternal life—was the stipulation of the covenant, on the part of God. If man were perfectly obedient, his Maker promised him an endless life of perfect happiness, as his reward. We cannot indeed conceive that any innocent moral being, under the government of God, should ever have been miserable. But the promise of eternal life to Adam, if he remained faithful during the period of his probation, insured to him *a higher measure or degree* of happiness than any which could have been claimed or expected, if God had not promised it to him by covenant. There was *grace*, therefore, on the part of God, even in the covenant of works—grace in the Creator condescending to treat at all with his creature in the way of covenant; and grace in covenanting to raise him to a higher state of happiness, if obedient, than that to which he could otherwise ever have risen. This strikingly shows the equity of the penal

part of the covenant—the infliction of such an awful punishment as was the consequence of disobedience.

The promise of life is indeed not explicitly announced, in the very compendious account given us in Genesis of man's original state: but it is clearly implied and intimated in the threatening. The threatening, or penalty, ran thus—"In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Here the implication distinctly is,—if thou eatest *not* thereof, thou shalt surely *live*. And the same truth is abundantly taught in other parts of scripture.

The life promised to man on obedience, included "the continuance of his natural life, consisting in the union of his soul and body; the continuance also of his spiritual life, consisting in the favour of God; and his entering on eternal life in heaven, after he had passed through the time of his trial upon earth."

Here it may be proper to consider what was the probable use, and special design, of "the tree of life." We know that Adam was not permitted to eat of it after his fall. If he had not fallen, the probability is, that when his period of probation was ended, he was then to eat of it, as *the seal of his immortality*; and afterwards to have been glorified, both in body and in soul, and to have been no more exposed to the danger of falling: but as he did not continue faithful, he was not permitted to take this symbol and seal of his fidelity. Bishop Horne, in a very ingenious discourse on the tree of life, has made this statement more probable, from a comparison of several parts of scripture, than you would readily suppose.\*

Let us now consider, more particularly, that the condition of the covenant of life, or of works, on the part of man, was *perfect obedience*. Man was fully qualified and competent to render such an obedience: for the moral law of God,—the rule of duty, of good and suitable conduct towards both God and man,—was written on his heart. In other words, "he

\* See Note, at the end of the lecture.

had a full knowledge of his duty, a full natural and moral ability to perform it, and a perfectly holy disposition of heart, whereby he was sweetly inclined to obedience. This complete furniture being given him by his Maker, his obedience was required to be perfect. He was to keep the whole law of God, both in heart and in life, with a faultless exactness. He was to believe whatever God should reveal, and he was to do whatsoever God should command. The whole will of his Maker, which he perfectly knew to be most excellent, was to be the rule by which his affections were to be guided, and his conduct to be directed, without the smallest deviation. As the test of this sinless obedience, man was to forbear eating of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil." —Be not, my young friends, of the number of those who show their ignorance of their Bible, by foolishly and profanely talking about the loss of Paradise, by the eating of an apple. The scripture nowhere informs us, and consequently it can never be known, what kind of fruit it was, which was borne by the forbidden tree. We are only told, that "the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise."

An inquiry of more importance is—why this tree received the name it bore—why it was called "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?" I answer—"by the law is the knowledge of sin." By the very prohibition to eat of this tree, man was taught that it was good to obey, and evil to disobey. The knowledge of the good of obedience, and the evil of disobedience, was intimated and inculcated, as often as he looked at the interdicted tree. It stood "in the midst of the garden," that he might often see it, and that the sight of it might constantly lead him to say—"there is the tree, which teaches me that it is good to obey, and evil to disobey." This I take to be the true design of the name it bore, rather than that which is sometimes mentioned,—that after he had eaten of it, he *experimentally* knew both good and evil;—good as lost, and evil as found. This was indeed

the effect of eating the forbidden fruit, and it might have been referred to in the name given to the tree. But it appears to have been intended to teach them good and evil; without the painful experience of losing the one, and incurring the other—and this, as I have said, was taught by the prohibition itself.\*

It is also proper to inquire, whether the prohibition to eat of this tree was a moral precept in its very nature, or moral only as expressive of the sovereign will of God.—I answer, that the precept appears to have derived its obligation entirely from the sovereign will of the Deity. “There could be no more evil in eating of that tree than of any other, antecedently to the command of God forbidding it: but after that, it was no more indifferent, but highly sinful to do it.” And hence perhaps may be assigned one of the best answers, that can be given to another inquiry, namely,—Why was the test of man’s moral state made to consist in such a circumstance as eating, or not eating, of a particular tree? The answer may be, that when the thing was in itself indifferent, obedience was grounded, simply and wholly, on the will of God: and when man’s obedience was yielded to the *mere will* of his Maker, this was the fullest evidence that it was *genuine* obedience,—that man acknowledged, unequivocally, the authority and right of God to give him law; and reposed such perfect confidence in his goodness, as to require nothing more to direct his conduct than to know that it was the will of his Creator.

Other reasons may be assigned, not different from this, but auxiliary to it. The observation is certainly just, that before the fall, “there were so few relations, that there could be no trial upon the precepts of the second table.† Adam could not be put on the trial of loving his neighbour as himself, when he had no neighbour to love. What was actually required, was a test of his supreme love to his Creator, and confidence

\* This is well illustrated in Bishop Horne’s fourth discourse, in which he acknowledges himself much indebted to Vitringa.

† Witherspoon.

in him,—as the mere authority of God was, as we have seen, the sanction. “It was also a just and natural acknowledgment, that the creature held all created comforts of God,”—so that he must not even *touch* one that God had prohibited. It likewise “intimated to him, that the favour of God, and not animal gratification, was the proper felicity of his nature; and it taught him not to consider himself at the summit of his happiness, in a state where self-denial was required.” In a word, how could self-denial be both exercised and manifested, in a perfectly holy being, but in regard to the gratification of his external senses? Thus, when examined, it appears that the test which was selected was, in all respects, that which was most proper. We must however constantly keep in mind—“that merely abstaining from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, was not the whole duty prescribed and demanded by God; but that the demand extended to universal obedience.” Considering the matter in this view, you will perceive, that our first parents actually sinned and rebelled against God, before they performed the *external action* of eating the forbidden fruit. By that action, they only gave *unequivocal proof*, that they had *before* fallen from their perfect rectitude, by the indulgence of pride, evil thoughts, and heart-rebellion against their Maker.

It only remains to consider the penalty of the covenant of works—it was *the pain of death*. There is every reason, both from observation and scripture, to believe that the penalty threatened to Adam for disobedience, was *death* in all the various and fearful significations of that word—*death temporal, spiritual, and eternal*. There is indeed scarcely any thing, against which men of corrupt minds have more vehemently contended than against this. But the mournful fact is ascertained and confirmed by the whole current of scripture, and by the actual state of the world. Do not men die? Who denies it? Are not men, without exception, depraved? Every day’s experience proves it. Where is the human being so foolish and abandoned, as to say that he never sinned, in thought, word, or deed? Should you hear such a de-

claration, you would only consider it as proving the truth which it denied. And is not eternal punishment threatened to sinners? There is really nothing more clearly declared in holy scripture. Now, was any part of all this incident to man, before the fall? No certainly. He was immortal; he was sinless; he was to be eternally happy. How comes it then, that man is so changed? Why does he die? Why is he depraved? Why is he an heir of wrath? Beyond all peradventure, his apostacy from God is the cause of all. This it was that changed the primitive state of man, and changed it totally. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

Some have supposed that there was some natural quality in the forbidden fruit, which changed the state of man’s body, so that he became mortal. This is certainly a mere conjecture—There is not the least evidence from scripture, that the forbidden fruit possessed any inherent deleterious properties. On the contrary, as already intimated, it rather appears that the fruit was indifferent, till it was prohibited. The worst effect was, that man’s *moral powers* were changed and prostrated; and this could not be effected by the mere natural operation of any material substance.

It appears then that the threatened penalty was—

(1) Temporal death:—the body should die and return to dust. (2) spiritual death:—the loss of his original righteousness and the favour of God. (3) Eternal death:—the exclusion of soul and body from God and happiness for ever. Such was the awful penalty threatened for sin: And however dreadful it may appear, my young friends, it certainly was a just and equitable penalty. You may know it was so, from the character of the infinitely good Being who denounced it. In one respect, without controversy, sin is an infinite evil—It is *objectively* infinite: that is, it is an offence committed against an infinite God;—infinite in his being, in his goodness, and in his worthiness to be perfectly loved and obeyed. It is not for those who have committed this awful and malig-

nant offence, to undertake to decide how much punishment it deserves. They are *parties* most deeply interested in endeavouring to mitigate their offence, and its penal consequences. Their very offence too—sin itself—has blinded their minds, and perverted their judgment. God who cannot be deceived, and who is infinitely good and merciful, as well as wise and just, has decided that “the wages of sin is death”—*death* in all the varieties of its form and terror.

Let me close this lecture therefore, with cautioning and exhorting you, not to be seduced by any speculations or reasonings, which go to diminish the evil of sin. It was observed to me early in life, by a very profound and sagacious divine, that if I would make it an object of particular attention, I should find, that almost all important errors in religion might be distinctly traced to *a light sense of the evil of sin*. A careful observation, I can truly say, has fully confirmed, and deeply impressed on my mind, the justice of this remark. Take an illustration, in a single instance—Say that sin is an inconsiderable, or venial evil:—then sorrow or repentance for it will, with a good and compassionate Being, insure its pardon—It needs no atonement; and needing to make no atonement, it was not necessary that the Saviour should be more than a creature—perhaps of an angelick nature; perhaps only human. He needed only to give instruction, and to set a good example, and he did no more. On the other hand, say that sin is an evil of inconceivable malignity:—then sorrow for it, will not, of itself, insure its pardon;—it may require—it did require—an atonement of infinite efficacy. The Saviour, who made this atonement, and who alone could make it, must have been a Being of infinite dignity; must have been truly a divine person. He gave instruction indeed, and set a perfect example: but the chief object of his mission was, to make expiation for the sins of the world.

Thus you perceive, that Socinianism on the one hand, and the orthodox faith on the other, are alike traceable to the views which the parties, severally, entertain of the evil of sin. I have made the statement to show you, that the

opinions we form on this important point are *radical*—are *fundamental*. Sin is a moral disease. Think little, or lightly of the disease, and you will see no need of a powerful remedy, or an infinitely skilful physician. But conceive the disease to be infinitely malignant, and you will see that its remedy and its physician, must both be divine—that nothing less can be of any avail. We know that our system is reproached with being awful, and gloomy, and derogatory to human nature. Part of this charge is equivocally true. We do hold that our nature is awfully degraded and debased by sin:—we do hold that all who are in their natural state, are in a state of condemnation and wrath. But we also hold, that God, in his infinite mercy, has provided a way of complete relief and restoration—yea, a way in which man may be restored to a better state than he lost by the fall. We admit the disease, and we magnify the remedy—Our opponents deny, or diminish the disease, and reject the remedy. We believe that the whole current of scripture, and the undeniably demonstrable state and history of the world, in all ages, do incontestably demonstrate that our race is in a state of sin, of extreme degradation, and wretchedness, and ruin. We verily believe that we need an infinite Saviour, and that such a Saviour is provided. Cherish this belief, my young friends. Let nothing subvert or shake your faith, in these fundamental doctrines of the Christian system. Never attempt in your own minds, to excuse or extenuate your guilt as sinners. On the contrary, admit your guilt in all its extent. Try to take affecting views of it. Pray to God to enable you to see it clearly, and to feel it sensibly—Why? That you may sink down into gloom and despondency? No assuredly, but that you may be led to a complete remedy for all—That you may be led to commit your souls truly, into the Saviour's hands: that being “washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,” you may be restored to the divine favour; that all your sins may be cancelled—all your guilt be washed away—That you may possess a present “peace, that passeth all understanding,”—“a

joy that is exceeding great and full of glory,"—the foretaste of the joys of heaven; where all the effects of sin shall for ever cease, and unceasing praise be rendered, "to Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and his Father—to him be glory, and dominion for ever and ever—Amen."

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Bishop Horne's third discourse, in the fourth edition of his sermons, is entitled, "The tree of life," and is grounded on the text Gen. ii. part of verse 9; "The tree of life also, in the midst of the garden." The whole discourse is calculated to illustrate and confirm what is stated in the lecture. The following extract only was read, when the lecture was delivered:

"The sacramental designation of the Tree of Life in Paradise may be farther evinced, perhaps, by a passage or two in the book of St. John's Revelation. 'To him that overcometh,' says the Captain of our salvation, 'will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.\* And again—'Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life.'† By 'eating of the Tree of Life in the Paradise of God,' is here evidently meant a participation of eternal life with God in heaven. Of this eternal life the faithful followers of their great leader are to be put in possession, as the reward of their labours, when those labours shall have been accomplished; when they shall have walked to the end of their journey in the path of Christ's commandments, and shall have finally overcome their spiritual enemies. May we not, therefore, by parity of reason, infer from hence the signification and intent of the Tree of Life in Eden? By means of that sacrament, had Adam gone happily through his probation, and persevered in obedience unto the end, he would have been admitted, in the kingdom of heaven, to that state of eternal life with God, for which he was always designed, and of which Paradise was the earthly resemblance. He would have been removed from the shadows of this world to the realities of a better. His removal must have differed, in the manner of it, from that of which we now live, or ought to live, in expectation. Without sin, death could have had no power over him. He would have been translated alive, as Enoch and Elijah, for particular purposes, afterwards were. The change would have been wrought in him at once, as it was in them, and as it will be in those, who shall be found alive, at the coming of our Lord to judgment.

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\* Rev. ii. 7.

† Rev. xxii. 14.

"When transgression had subjected Adam to a sentence of condemnation, the case was altered. Glory and immortality could no longer be obtained upon the terms of the first covenant, now broken and void. The very attempt became criminal. Man was to be put under a new covenant, and in a new course of trial. He was to suffer in the flesh for sin, and to pay the penalty of death. But, through the merits of a surety, that death was to be made the gate of immortality. By faith he was to acquire, upon the mediatorial plan, a fresh right or power to eat of the Tree of Life, and live for ever, after the resurrection from the dead, with his propitiated and reconciled Maker. In mercy, therefore, he was excluded from the garden of Eden, and from the original symbol of that eternal life, which was now to be sought after by other means, and represented by other sacraments. He was sent forth into the world to pass his time in toil, pain, and sorrow; in mourning, contrition, and penance; till death should set him free, and introduce him to the joys purchased and prepared for him by that blessed person, "in whom is Life, and the Life was the light of men."\* The same divine person was always the source of immortality, however the sacred symbols, instituted to adumbrate it, have been varied under different dispensations. To our first parents, before the fall, he stood in the relation of Creator and Lord. To them, and to their posterity, since that sad catastrophe, he hath stood, and ever continued to stand, in the new relation of Saviour and Redeemer. The man who doth not now acknowledge him in this latter character, will find him, in the former, an avenger to execute wrath: and what wrath can be so fierce and terrible, as that of the Lamb? It is oil set on fire. The sinner unless he be in love with condemnation, must not revert to the first covenant, and aim at the acquisition of eternal life, on the foot of the law of works, or the performance of unsinning obedience. In this case the rebel claims promotion, instead of suing for pardon. He puts forth his hand to the fruit of the now forbidden tree, which is no longer food for man. Its nature is changed, with our condition. To the eye of human pride it still looks fair and tempting; but its contents, when eaten, are ashes and sulphur; and immortality, without redemption, would prove the reverse of a blessing."

\* John i. 4.

## LECTURE XV.

*Did our first Parents continue in the state wherein they were created?*

WE are now to consider the following answer of our catechism—

“Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God.”

In discussing two or three of the previous answers, we have had occasion to say so much on the nature of that estate in which man was originally created, that it will not be necessary to add much to it here. It was an estate of perfect innocence, in which he had his standing under God, as his Lord and Creator; it was an estate in which he was perfectly conformed, in his measure, to the image of God; had intimate fellowship and communion with him; and an ample dominion over all the work of his hands in this lower world—the tree of knowledge of good and evil alone excepted: It was an estate too, in which he was bound to obedience by solemn covenant engagements, enforced, as was shown in the last lecture, by the awful sanctions of life and death, in all the various and extensive import of those terms; and in which he knew that his posterity, as well as himself, was to share. It was in fine, an estate which he had full power given him to maintain; since he could not lose it without the voluntary choice of evil; and since his will, though capable of choosing evil, was not only not inclined to it, but sweetly and perfectly disposed to the choice of good. Such being his estate, he was left to the freedom of his own will; and he fell by sinning against God.

How a being, formed and constituted as man was, should fall into sin,—how sin should ever come to be the choice of a perfectly free and holy soul,—is a problem on which the

strongest minds have often tried their strength; and hitherto, so far as I know, they have tried it in vain. *The origin of moral evil* is, in every view that we can take of the subject, an inexplicable mystery. It is one of the *arcana* of the moral world. While no one can doubt or deny the fact, that it does exist,—for I do not believe that even professed atheists doubt it,—yet to account for its existence, or to explain the process, or manner, in which it came into existence, is not, I suspect, within the reach of the human faculties in the present life.

Will any one undertake to affirm that the Deity could not have preserved all his moral offspring from sin?—We have no right to say that he could not. We are by no means sure that man might not have been made and preserved in a state of as perfect freedom as he actually possessed, and yet have been kept from sin. And for myself, I would not dare to say that infinite wisdom, power and goodness, could not have formed *a system*, into which as much happiness should have entered as will ever be found in our system, and yet that no moral evil should have entered with it—I cannot tell what infinite wisdom, power and goodness, could perform. Thus does this subject transcend our powers, as it relates to the Creator.

. It is also unsearchable, I think, even as it relates to the creature. How man, being perfectly holy, should fall in love with sin,—how the first sinful exercise or emotion, should gain admission to his heart—is a difficulty which at present we are unable to explain. If we suppose that we find some assistance in an explanation, from the circumstance that man was powerfully and most insidiously tempted—as he certainly was—still the question returns, how did his *tempter* become a sinner?—how did the angels, who kept not their first state, fall into transgression? Sin did not first take place on earth. It began in heaven, among an order of beings of much higher rank and nobler powers than those which we possess. How did rebellion against God first find its way into their powerful, and pure, and holy minds?—And here, too, at least

in regard to the first that fell, there was no tempter. What shall we say to these things? In reference to our Maker, we should say—"O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." Yes, the judgments and the ways of God are past finding out.

And yet, my young friends, let it be remembered after all, that we know perfectly, all that we need to know on this very subject: yea, let it be remembered, that a murmuring desire to know more than God has made known on this subject, partakes of the nature of that very sin by which our first parents fell—the sin of wishing to be as Gods in our knowledge. We know assuredly that our Creator is perfectly holy, and perfectly opposed to all sin; that he is not and cannot be the author of it; that though he left man to sin, he did not incline him to it; and that on this very fall of man, is founded the whole work of redemption by Christ; which will exhibit the divine glory, and raise the redeemed of the Lord to the greatest heights of heavenly bliss, throughout eternity.

In regard to man, we know that although he was created perfect, yet he was also created mutable; that being mutable, he was capable of falling; that though we cannot explain the *manner* in which sin was conceived in his heart, yet that under the temptation of the devil, *there* it was conceived; that he did sin, and that freely; and that sinning he fell, and "brought death into the world and all our wo;" and that this whole transaction did actually take place, in such manner as to leave the whole guilt of the fall resting on man, and on his vile seducer. These are facts, clearly ascertained to us in scripture; and they are *all* that it is of any *practical* use for us to know. If we could clearly understand all that is actually beyond our depth in this subject, what would be the consequence? It would make no alteration at all, in any one point of duty. It would then be our duty to act exactly as we are now called to act. Our knowledge might gratify curiosity, but it would not direct our practice. And it seems to be the character of the divine dispensations, and of the state of our

knowledge at present—not only in regard to religion, but to every thing else—that we should be acquainted with facts, and with the use that we are to make of them; but that we should be able to proceed but a very little way, in any of our theories for their explanation. To be humbly submissive to this order, and content with it, is an act of pious resignation wherever it is found; and those who act otherwise incur both guilt and torment, and after all make no advances whatever in knowledge. Hear the declaration of the wisest of men, speaking too under the guidance of inspiration, on this very point—which, if it had been duly regarded, might, one would think, have prevented many a long and painful inquiry. Solomon says, “Lo, this only have I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.”—That is, the result of all my inquiries and investigations, and the amount of all that is revealed, and that can be known on this deep speculation, is simply this, That God made man holy, and that he and his posterity have made themselves sinners. This then is the result of all, and here we rest.

Among other things, in regard to which the busy minds of men have employed themselves to little purpose, is the inquiry, what was the length of time that our first parents spent in the state of innocence, or before the fall? Some have concluded that the space was very small, and some that it was very considerable. If I were to form a conjecture, it would be, that it was neither the one nor the other. Supposing the truth of what has heretofore been suggested, that the angels were created on the first of the six days during which our earth was formed and furnished, it seems reasonable to suppose that there was some moderate period of time necessary for their probation, fall and punishment, and their efforts for the seduction of Adam and Eve. Yet no great space certainly was necessary for the whole. But what was the state of the fact we are not told, and therefore can never certainly know.

Another point which must be briefly noticed, in considering the fall of our first parents, is the character of the tempter.

The account given us by Moses of the primitive apostacy, as we have already shown, is not to be considered as an allegory, but as historical truth. Viewed in this manner, it appears that Satan, or the chief of the fallen angels, made use of the serpent for the seduction of our first mother.

A late commentator, Dr. Adam Clarke, has endeavoured, in an elaborate note of his commentary, to prove that a *serpent* was not the animal whose organs were used by the adversary, to hold his conversation with Eve.—That this animal was, on the contrary, a species of the *ape*, most probably the ourang outang. He supposes that he has assigned satisfactory reasons to prove the truth of his opinion. But I confess it appears otherwise to me, after reading and considering his statement, as carefully as I can. He admits—what indeed could not be denied—that the Greek translators of the Old Testament, who lived some centuries before Christ, have translated the Hebrew word נְהֵשׁ (*nehesh*), which in that language is the name of the tempting animal, by ὄφης (*ophis*), the Greek word for serpent. To me it seems unspeakably more probable that these translators should have known what was the animal really understood by the Hebrew word, than that the discovery should be made two thousand years afterwards, and this too, as the commentator admits, only by an analogy, or similarity between the Hebrew word and an Arabick term, which, in its root, signifies both devil and ape. But be this as it may, there are very frequent allusions to the tempter in the New Testament. He is there called not only the serpent, and the old serpent,—but the *dragon*, and the *old dragon*,—retaining the genus and describing a species. And although I admit with the commentator, both that the New Testament writers usually quoted from the Septuagint, and that the point, as a matter of faith, is not highly important, yet I cannot admit that the inspired writers of the New Testament would ever have given their sanction to a palpable error, or a gross falsehood; and by so doing, have not only retained but propagated it widely. Beside, though the commentator explains some difficult points very ingeniously by his new trans-

lation, he *makes* one difficulty, as great as any he removes. It was a part of the curse pronounced on the *נֶהֶשׁ* (*nehesh*), “on thy belly shalt thou go.” Now this is not verified in any of the ape species; and it is by no means satisfied by saying, as the commentator does, “thou shalt no longer walk erect, but mark the ground equally with thy hands and feet.” This animal it is expressly said, “was cursed *above all cattle*, and above *every beast* of the field.” But to mark the ground with their feet, both before and behind, is the property of all cattle, of every beast of the field—of every quadruped that walks the earth. The serpent, on the contrary, is really degraded *below* them, by dragging his whole length through the dust; and this seems to be the discriminating part of the malediction. On the whole, the supposition of Milton in this particular, as in most others where inspiration leaves any thing to be supplied, seems to me the most plausible. It appears probable that the serpent, before the fall, was a *lovely* animal; that he moved, as Milton represents, on a spiral base; that he was of course principally erect; that he was known for his subtlety or wisdom; and that on this account the surprise of Eve was the less, at finding him capable of speech. His curse consisted in degrading him, in all his qualities, to what he now is.

But it is infinitely more important to consider the wiles of the adversary who lay concealed under the serpent, than to determine what was the original form of that animal. The account given of the temptation of our first mother, like every other part of the narrative, is very short and comprehensive. Yet comprehensive as it is, enough is said to show that the subtlety of the great deceiver was all exerted on the occasion. Nothing can be imagined more artful and insidious than his temptation. He begins with an inquiry addressed to the woman, in regard to the prohibition by the Creator of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. She answers it in a manner seemingly calculated to justify the divine prohibition of the interdicted tree, and to magnify the bounty of God in granting liberty to eat of all beside. The adversary

then proceeds to question and deny the penalty of death, and in such manner as to intimate that possibly Eve had mistaken it; and yet carrying clearly the charge both of cruelty and falsehood, against the great Creator. Eve listens, deliberates, and is lost. She appears to have hesitated for some time; to have viewed the tree attentively, to have strengthened her desire of eating by the view, and thus to have gained resolution to perpetrate the fatal act.

Ah! my young friends, remember while you live, this tampering with temptation by our first mother; and as, at this hour, you feel its consequences, follow not the fatal example. Remember it as a warning; and especially in youth, while the passions are ardent and the fancy is active. It was written for our learning. Remember that if you begin to parley with temptation, you are undone. Repel the tempter without listening to him. If he can gain your fancy and your passions, he will certainly succeed. *Obsta principiis.*—Dash from you, with abhorrence, the poisoned cup, the moment it is presented. Never listen to temptation—Never make it a question whether you will comply or not. Never suffer it to become the subject of meditation—There it first pollutes the soul. Look upon it, and think of it, and you will comply. Remember too that all seducers and tempters to sin, are acting the part of Satan. If you listen to them you are lost. Hear them not; repel them with abhorrence, scorn and indignation. *Avoid temptation, likewise, as far as possible.* “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.”

The woman having fallen, became the tempter of the man.—“She gave also unto her husband with her and he did eat.” We are not told by what particular temptations or allurements Adam was induced to comply. Nothing was ever more beautifully imagined than what Milton has said, on the manner in which Adam was prevailed on to share the ruin of his fallen wife. Still, it may be nothing more than imagination. What was the fact we are not told, and therefore can never

know. The Apostle Paul, in enjoining a due subjection of the woman to the man, tells us—that “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression.” But it clearly appears, by the context of that passage, that the apostle’s assertion is to be confined to the *first* deception—He was not first deceived—How much deception was actually practised in his fall, we do not know. Probably there was less of it in the whole process, than in the case of Eve; and of course that his guilt was, on this account, greater than hers. On another account it was certainly greater. He was the proper head and representative of the human race. Had he retained his integrity, notwithstanding the fall of Eve, both he and his posterity would have been safe. She would doubtless have received the due reward of her guilt, and another help-mate would have been provided for him. But he yielded to the considerations, whatever they were, which assaulted his innocence and integrity. He ate of the forbidden fruit. He mingled his guilt and his destiny with those of his wife. The united head of the human family thus became sinful and corrupt; and the contamination will reach the remotest of their offspring.

It belongs to a subsequent answer in the catechism, to show the accumulated guilt which was involved in this transgression, and the effects which it produced on our first parents. In the mean time, the present lecture will be concluded with a few inferences, of a practical kind, from what you have heard.

1. From what has been said in this lecture, you may plainly see that a single act of sin may draw after it an endless train of fatal consequences. It is true indeed, that the sinful acts of no individual of mankind since the fall, ever was, or ever will be, so extensively connected with injury to others, as was the eating of the forbidden fruit by our first parents. Yet in very numerous instances still, the effects of one violation of the moral law of God may be seen, in a train of evils and sufferings of the most mournful kind—not to be avoided in this life, and often extending into the eternal world.

Think, for an illustration of this, of the single acts of unbridled anger—producing murder, maiming, duelling, and personal injuries innumerable; and of cupidity—as witnessed in theft, forgery, perjury, lying, fraud, and falsehood in a thousand forms. Think in how many instances one act of libidinous indulgence has blasted for ever the hopes of female youth and beauty; brought dishonour on a whole family, and broken a father's and a mother's heart. Think of the single acts of traitors and tyrants, by which thousands have lost their lives and liberties, and whole nations have been desolated and clothed in mourning. Think of these things, and observe from them that the first constitution of God is still in a measure continued; learn how extensively our destinies are still connected one with another; and how great is our responsibility both to God and man, to avoid the cause and origin of such extended evils. You cannot, my dear youth, be too watchful against temptation or excitement to those acts of transgression, of which a single one may indelibly stain your character, and blast your prospects, and diminish your influence and usefulness, for the whole of life; may bring misery and disgrace on others, and put at fearful hazard the eternal destinies both of them and of yourselves. But remember too, that your own unaided vigilance will not be sufficient to protect you. *They* only are well kept whom God keeps. Unless you are guarded by his providence and grace, you will certainly fall, notwithstanding all your purposes of care and watchfulness. By daily prayer therefore, seek the grace and protection of God, which alone can effectually preserve you; and which, if you obtain them, you will certainly be safe.

2. In view of the subtlety and power of the great adversary of souls, how consoling is it to the true believer, to think that he is in covenant with that Saviour who has vanquished Satan; who came to destroy the work of the devil; and who will keep all his faithful people from being tempted above what they are able to bear?

When we reflect that such was the skill, artifice and influence, of the malignant spirit that seduced our first parents,

that he prevailed against them, when they had no corrupt nature, no sinful propensities, to which he might address his temptations; and that we have a nature and propensities which are the allies, as it were, of all his vile suggestions,—when we consider too, that he has increased his subtlety by the experience of six thousand years, and that the best saint on earth is sanctified but in part—we may see, that not one of our fallen race has any security against being for ever undone, but from being a member of the mystical body of Christ. Yes, here is our only safety. If sinless, perfect man, standing in his own strength, fell before the sagacity and snares of Satan, he would be sure to make a prey of every sinful and imperfect man, if that man were left to himself. But the people of God are never *finally* left to themselves; they are not expected to stand in their own strength: and to make them attempt it, is one of the wiles of their great adversary, by which, more perhaps than by any other, he does them a temporary injury. They however are the blood-bought property of their Redeemer—and none on earth or in hell is able to pluck them out of his and his Father's hand. Made *one* with their Almighty Saviour, his honour is concerned to preserve them unto his heavenly kingdom. He has conquered and triumphed over the great enemy of their souls, who cannot tempt them farther than he is permitted by Christ, their spiritual head—by him who has promised that his grace shall be sufficient for them, and that in every temptation he will make a way for their escape, that they may be able to bear it. Here is their security—While therefore they are exhorted to be sober and vigilant, knowing that their “adversary the devil, as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour,” and are enjoined to resist him steadfastly, they have the comfort to know that in so doing, they will at last come off conquerors and more than conquerors. Their adversary may, for wise purposes, be permitted for a time, and to a certain extent, to vex and worry them, but he can never lastingly injure or destroy them. They are “kept by almighty power through faith unto salvation;” and the period will shortly ar-

rive, when they will escape for ever beyond all the assaults of Satan, temptation and sin; and when all their present trials and conflicts, will but serve to increase the eternal weight of glory, in which they shall share with their reigning and triumphant Lord.

Be persuaded, my dear youth, to seek with unceasing diligence a vital union with this precious and all-sufficient Saviour. Without this, all your purposes and plans of avoiding even the worst of crimes, may prove abortive; or if by the good providence and restraining grace of God, you shall be preserved from scandalous and enormous sins, yet unless a living faith unite you to the Lord Jesus Christ, you will assuredly lose your souls at last, and be for ever the companions of the devil and his angels. Be very sensible of this; let it dwell constantly on your minds; let it preserve you from satisfying yourselves with an amiable exterior, or with any mere formal attention to religion. Be not satisfied till you "know in whom you have believed, and that he is able to keep that which you have committed to him, against that day."—Amen.

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## LECTURE XVI.

*What is sin?*

*What was the sin whereby our first Parents fell from the state wherein they were created?*

THE first subject of attention at this time, is the following very important answer in our catechism—namely, “Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.”

That we may understand correctly the nature of sin, as it is here defined, it will be of use to consider briefly, the nature of that law of which all sin is a violation. The law which sin violates is the law of God. “Whosoever committeth sin

—says the apostle John—transgresseth also the law; for sin is a transgression of the law.” In defining a law generally, Hooker says—“That which doth assign unto each thing the kind, that which doth moderate the force and power, that which doth appoint the form and measure of working, the same we term *a law*.” More shortly and popularly, and with reference to moral agents, a law may be defined—a prescribed and obligatory rule of action.

The laws of God, for the government of men, have some of them been temporary and local, and some of perpetual and universal obligation. The ceremonial and judicial laws of the Jews were, during the continuance of the Mosaick economy, perfectly obligatory on that people—as much so as the precepts of the decalogue. But they were local and temporary. They never were binding on any other people beside the Jews; and not binding on them after the advent of the Messiah. They were given for a particular purpose—That purpose has been accomplished, and the Deity, the legislator who enacted, has repealed them, and they are no longer laws.

But there are other laws of God, which are of perpetual and universal obligation—These are called moral laws. But here, again, there is a distinction which deserves to be noticed. Some of these laws are technically denominated *moral natural*, and others *moral positive*. Laws *naturally moral*, are those which seem to derive their obligation from the very nature of things; insomuch that you cannot conceive that they should not be obligatory, while the relations exist to which they refer. Thus you cannot conceive that a rational and moral being should exist, and not be under obligation to reverence his Creator—You cannot conceive that it should be lawful for such a creature, to disregard and revile the infinitely great and good Author of his being.

On the other hand, laws *positively moral*, derive their obligation not from the nature of things, but solely from the explicit command of God. Thus the intermarriage of brothers and sisters, must once have been lawful; and if so, there is no natural immorality in such a connexion. But this con-

nexion has been forbidden by God, from a very early period of the world; and is therefore now, a violation of a law called *moral positive*.

The moral law of God—or the rule of moral action for his creature man—was, no doubt, clearly written on man's heart, at his first creation—That is, he was so formed that he had a clear perception of his duty, and felt as he ought, his obligations to perform it perfectly. After the fall, this original law of moral duty, was greatly defaced and obliterated by sin. Some faint traces of it, however, seem yet to remain, in the dictates of natural conscience. But as the restoration of man was intended by God, he was graciously pleased to reveal anew his moral law, in all its extent, to his fallen creature. This was done most fully in the ten commandments, given to Moses in Mount Sinai, engraved by the finger of God on two tables of stone: and this compend, usually called the decalogue, although extremely short, is nevertheless, when taken in its spirituality, comprehensive and complete.

All the laws of the decalogue are *moral natural*, unless it be that part of the fourth, which relates to the portion of our time that is to be exclusively devoted to God. And indeed in this, there may be a *natural fitness*, with which we are not acquainted.

Short as the decalogue is, we have a summary of the moral law, which is still much more compendious, and yet entirely complete and perfect. It is this—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.” Our Saviour declared that “on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Here then we have the whole moral law, as sanctioned by the lawgiver Himself, in a single sentence: and it is of unspeakable advantage to have it so expressed. It presents us with a short rule by which to ascertain our duty, and by which to discern and determine what is sinful—Sin is the transgression of this moral law.

In the original language of the New Testament, the word

for sin, *ἀμαρτία*, (*hamartia*) is derived from a word whose primitive signification is, *to miss the mark*. This suggests as perfect and extensive an idea of sin, as perhaps can be given. The moral law holds up to us *a mark*, at which we are to aim, or *a rule* or *line*, to which we are to conform. Every thing which misses or falls short of this mark, or which deviates from this rule or line, is *sin*. Hence too, we have a clear illustration of the greatness, or aggravation of some sins, in comparison with others. All short-coming or deviation is sin; yet some defects come short, and some actions deviate, unspeakably more than others.

The answer in the catechism divides sin into two kinds—“Any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God;” that is, sins of omission, and sins of commission. Some writers on the subject of moral criminality in our country, have said a good deal to prove that all sin is of a *positive* nature; or that it consists in an actual transgression of the divine law. But this appears to me, little more than a play upon words. It is indeed true that all guilt is positive, and that all conduct which is not conformed to the law of God, is sinful conduct. But we are abundantly taught in scripture, to make a distinction between sins of omission and sins of commission. “These things (said the Saviour) ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.” Nay, if we take the scripture for our guide, as doubtless we ought, we shall find much more there said, against sins of omission, than against sins of commission. The reason of this probably is, that the guilt of actual transgression, is at once admitted and allowed by all; while many are disposed to think very little of sins of omission. It was therefore proper to *inculcate* the guilt and the danger of omissions, that they might not be overlooked—This was the point, or pass, which it was peculiarly necessary to guard. Hence we find, it is the tree which bore *no* fruit, the lamp that had *no* oil, the unprofitable servant that made *no* use of his talent, which are held up as beacons, to warn us of the danger of omitted duty. In like manner, the sentence pronounced on the wicked in

the final judgment, is made to turn entirely on omitted duties—Not a single actual transgression is charged—“I was an hungered, and ye gave me *no* meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me *no* drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me *not* in; naked, and ye clothed me *not*; sick and in prison, and ye visited me *not*.” So also the apostle to the Hebrews—“How shall we escape, if we *neglect* so great salvation?” The great mass of those who hear the gospel without benefit, it is probable lay their consciences to sleep on this pillow of deception, that they have *done no harm*,—that they have never committed any flagrant offences; when, notwithstanding, they are manifestly living in the total and soul-ruining neglect of all the duties which they owe to God. Truly we have reason to believe, that omission and neglect will destroy a very large proportion of those who perish. They will perish because they would not repent; would not believe in Christ; would not yield themselves a living sacrifice to God.

It is however to be admitted and remembered, that in the scale of comparative malignity, sins of commission are generally greater than those of omission. To violate actively a known law, seems, in most instances, to require a greater force or hardihood of moral pravity, than to disregard the requisitions of a law. There is also in sins of commission, a greater scope for aggravation than in sins of omission. Suppose a man to omit every duty which he is capable of performing, and although it must be admitted that his guilt is inexcusably great, yet it certainly falls short of his, who is a blasphemer, a thief and a murderer. Men of great natural powers, and of extensive authority or influence, do sometimes, by sins of commission, accumulate guilt that seems to resemble that of the fallen angels. In this view, infidel, and other licentious writers, conquerors, tyrants, and all extensive oppressors and corrupters of mankind, will be perceived to have incurred a criminality, which must fill us with horror in the contemplation.

After all, we are to remember, that it is not *universally* and *invariably* true, that sins of commission are greater than

those of omission. The omission of all the duties which men owe to God, certainly renders them more guilty in his sight, than they would have been rendered by many unequitable acts done to their fellow creatures,—towards whom, it is perhaps their boast and their deceptive reliance, that they are just and benevolent. And even in regard to duties that belong entirely to the second table of the decalogue, it is plainly a greater sin to omit to relieve the pressing necessities of a parent, than to indulge in some recriminating language, under a great provocation.

But in this connexion, I think it important to warn you distinctly, my young friends, against the danger—and it is one of no small magnitude—of accustoming yourselves to excuse or extenuate guilt, by *comparing* one sin with another. This is a common, and a most pernicious evil. Probably a large proportion of mankind, under the light of the gospel, are falsely speaking peace to themselves, because they believe that they are not so guilty as many others. They seem to forget that in making this estimate, they are both judge and party, and therefore are not likely to decide fairly. But suppose they did, what avails it that others are more guilty than we, if both they and we are so guilty as to be adjudged to eternal death. The multitude of those who perish, will not alleviate, but aggravate the torment, of every individual who helps to form that multitude. A mind truly enlightened, is always disposed to think its own sins greater than those of many others. The reason of this may be easily assigned. Every good man *knows* his own sins, and the aggravations of them, better than he can know those of others; and therefore he is ready to suppose that others have been less vile. The apostle Paul placed himself among the chief of sinners; and to this every real penitent will be far more disposed, than to make any favourable comparisons in his own behalf.

On the whole, my dear youth, as sin is the transgression of the law, see the importance of often setting that law before you, and of comparing with it your heart and your life

Often say—each to himself—“The law of God requires me to love him with all my heart, soul, strength and mind; and to love my neighbour as myself. How can I abide the test, when brought to this standard of duty? Have I ever truly loved God at all? If not, my whole life has been nothing but unmixed sin. If I have loved him at all, yet alas! how imperfect has been that love; how far from loving him with *all my heart*—with all the powers of my nature, and without any interruption? What immeasurable guilt does this investigation present to my view! And it is increased when I think that, so far from loving my neighbour as myself, I have, in addition to much self preference of my temporal interests to his, had but little concern, in comparison with what I ought to have had, for his eternal happiness,—the salvation of his immortal soul. What then, though the world can charge me with no gross vices? What, though I am even commended as amiable, extolled for my virtues, and held up as an example to others?—“God seeth not as man seeth,” and he sees and knows that, when brought to the standard of his good and holy law, I am a great and inexcusable sinner. It is in this way, my dear young friends, that persons of the most amiable natural tempers, manners and deportment before the world—qualities that we do not undervalue—nay, it is in this way that persons of real and eminent piety—when, under the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit, they view themselves in the glass of God’s strict and holy law—always see that in themselves they are vile, polluted and undone sinners; that they are justly condemned; that they have no righteousness of their own, on which they can rely; but must place their whole dependance for pardon and acceptance with God, on the finished righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are several other divisions of moral transgression, or of sin, which I will cursorily mention, and make as I proceed a few brief remarks. Sins are sometimes divided into *voluntary* and *involuntary*. This I hold to be altogether an improper division—if the words *voluntary* and *involun-*

*tary* be strictly taken. No involuntary act can ever be sinful. It is the choice of the will, which alone renders any act a sinful act. Habits of sin, in consequence of which men often sin without thinking of it, have all been formed by voluntary acts, and are still voluntary habits. If the will were constantly and steadily set against them, they would be broken and changed.

Again—There are sins of *inadvertence*, and sins of *deliberation*. Sin that is committed with deliberation, or with time for deliberation, is always and justly considered as more heinous than that which is committed by thoughtlessness, by the surprise of temptation suddenly occurring, or through the impulse of violently excited passion. The latter however, is often aggravated in no inconsiderable degree; especially when previous transgression of a similar kind, should have produced vigilance, caution and self command. But deliberate sin is always in the highest degree criminal—Offences of this character are called in scripture “*presumptuous sins.*” They always imply that conscience is either violated, or for the time inoperative.

Again—There may be sins of *comparative ignorance*, and sins against *light and knowledge*. “Ignorance, total and invincible, takes away all sin.”\* We must know a thing to be our duty, before we can be under obligation to perform it. Yet voluntary ignorance, when men may have easy access to information, will not take away guilt. It is conscious guilt and hatred of the light, which often keeps men in ignorance; and this is a sin which our Saviour severely reprobates. But the possession of light and knowledge, always adds, in a high degree, to the guilt of sin. “The servant which knew his Lord’s will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.” I shall only remark farther on this topick, that some seem to suppose that if they refrain from sin in the overt act—that is, in word and deed—they are comparatively innocent. This is a great and pernicious error. Overt acts may be injurious to others, in their immediate effects and by their example.

\* Witherspoon.

But the thoughts, the heart, the will, the affections, the desires, are the seat of all sin, in the sight of God; and here we may be, and often are, inexpressibly criminal, when no outward act indicates our guilt. *He* has yet to learn what sin is, who takes no account of the sins which can be known only to God and to himself. It is against inward heart sin, that every good man has his sorest struggles, and greatest and longest conflicts.

The next answer in our catechism has been so much anticipated, that it will require but little to be added, to what you have heard in this and the last lecture; it is stated thus;—“The sin whereby our first parents fell from the state wherein they were created, was their eating the forbidden fruit.”

It has already been remarked, that our first parents sinned *before* they ate the forbidden fruit. The action of eating that fruit, flowed from a heart already yielded to sin and in rebellion against God. To ascertain this fact to the guilty parties, beyond the possibility of denial, might be a part of the design in the prohibition of that act. A sense of guilt and shame however, does not seem to have been felt, till the outward and visible transgression had taken place—Then it was felt with an overwhelming force. “Their bodily nakedness (says Scott) had not previously excited the sensation of shame: but now, being stripped of the robe of innocence, and despoiled of the image of God, the defence of his protection, and the honour of his presence, they perceived that they were, indeed, made naked to their shame; and their outward nakedness, appeared an indication of the exposed and shameful condition to which they were reduced.”

The aggravated guilt of the sin of our first parents, it is awful to contemplate. I think it cannot be better described, than in the following passage from a commentary on Gen. iii. 6, by the excellent writer whom I have just now quoted.—“Considering this offence in all its circumstances, and with all its aggravations, we may term it the prolix parent and grand exemplar, of all the transgressions committed on earth ever since.—Whatever there hath been in any sin of un-

lief, ingratitude, apostacy, rebellion, robbery, contempt, defiance, hard thoughts of God, and enmity against Him: whatever there hath been of idolatry, as comprehending faith in Satan, the god and prince of this world, worship of him and obedience to him; of exorbitant pride, self-love, and self-will, in affecting that independency, exaltation and homage which belong to God; and of inordinate love to the creatures, in seeking our happiness in the possession and enjoyment of them: whatever discontent, sensual lust, covetousness, murder and mischief, were ever yet contained in any one sin, or all which have been committed upon earth, the whole concentered in this one transaction.—Nor have they been wide of the truth, who have laboured to prove, that all the ten commandments, extensively and spiritually expounded, were at once violated: and the more reasonable the prohibition, and the more trifling the inducement were, the more aggravated was the offence.”

But great as the sin of our first parents was, it is comfortable to think—and how does it illustrate the boundless condescension and mercy of God to know!—that there is reason to conclude it was forgiven. There have been a few indeed who have held the contrary opinion, and have maintained that Adam and Eve perished in their sin. But the general current of opinion has always been against this conclusion. And to my apprehension the scriptures, although they do not in so many words say that they were pardoned, yet intimate it with sufficient clearness. To them the first promise of the covenant of grace was made—the promise of salvation through a Redeemer—namely, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head: and it seems to be made in such a manner as clearly to intimate their personal interest in it. Other passages also lead to the same desirable conclusion. On the whole, there is I apprehend no reason to doubt that Adam and Eve are among the redeemed of the Lord, and that our first parents will meet in heaven with all their offspring who shall be admitted there;—that the infinite reach of redeeming mercy claimed its first and brightest trophy, in the

remission of their sin who had ruined a world; and that in this example, as in many since, the forgiveness of the chief of sinners showed beyond a doubt, that though every unbeliever shall certainly perish, yet that whosoever believeth shall as certainly be saved.

In closing this lecture, let me lead you to reflect for a few moments—

1. On the unreasonableness of sin. The unreasonableness of any act, or system of conduct, is ascertained by its contrariety to equity, propriety and wisdom, or by its violation of a righteous precept or requisition. Now, can any thing be more equitable, proper, wise, and righteous, than the law of God, which requires us to love, obey, and serve him, with all our powers? He is infinitely worthy of our love; he is our Creator and benefactor; and to love and obey him is to ensure our own highest happiness, as well as to promote his declarative glory. But every act of sin is committed in disregard of all these powerful and constraining considerations, and in violation of all the sacred obligations which they involve. Can any thing be more perfectly contrary than this, to every dictate of reason? In putting this question, I wish for a moment to leave out of sight, if I could, the *guilt* of sin. Men do not think as they ought, of the *contrariety* of every sin to all that is *rational* and *equitable*. If they would dwell upon this till they saw it clearly, it would bring home to their consciences a sense of guilt, with irresistible force.

2. Let us for a moment think of the malignity, or evil nature of sin, as seen in its *effects*. It has awfully changed, in our world, the creation of God both moral and natural. There must be something inconceivably deadly in this evil, that could thus transfuse its poison, through successive ages, into every vein and member of a universe —withering every thing that it touches, and changing every thing from all that was fair, and lovely, and holy, into all that is foul, and hateful, and hellish. And yet—

3. We are to remember and lay it deeply to heart, that this horrible and destructive evil has been cherished in our own

bosoms, and has polluted us throughout. *We* are sinners—sinners of no ordinary character—sinners whose guilt is aggravated by every circumstance that can heighten transgression; and who, if our sins are not pardoned, are the heirs apparent of a peculiarly large portion of “the wrath to come.” But—

4. The transcendent mercy of God has provided a complete remedy—has provided a Saviour. We may be “washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” Now is all this so!—and is it yet possible that any sinner should reject this Saviour! Yes, it is all so—and sinners thus guilty, polluted, condemned, and perishing, do reject this Saviour—presented to them, and pressed on their acceptance! Ah! this is the sin of sins; the sin that cuts the soul off from its remedy and seals its perdition:—this is the *damning sin of unbelief!* And will any of you, my young friends, continue in this sin and risk its consequences? Can you go to your pillows this night, with a quiet mind, with all your guilt unpardoned? Raise the earnest aspirations of your souls to God with the breath that you now draw, to aid you by his grace—and so aided, seek till you find reconciliation with God, and the pardon and cleansing of all your sins, through the atoning blood and sanctifying Spirit of Jesus, our Redeeming God. Amen.

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## LECTURE XVII.

*Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?*

THE important and interesting subject of discussion now before us, is thus stated in our catechism:—“The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.”

The first point demanding attention in this answer is, that the covenant made with Adam related not only to himself, but to his posterity. Let us examine what evidence we have of the truth of this position.

We have heretofore shown that a covenant was made with Adam; and that the promise of it was eternal life, and the penalty eternal death. But how does it appear that this promise, or penalty, was to reach all his offspring, as well as himself? Can it be clearly shown that Adam was the representative and covenant head of his posterity, so that they were to be considered as standing or falling with him? Yes, my young friends, this is clear, beyond all rational controversy. It is clear, both from the unequivocal statements of scripture, and from observation on the actual state of the world. The Apostle Paul, in more than one instance, runs a parallel between the ruin brought on the whole race of man by the disobedience of Adam, and the benefits procured by Christ for all his sincere disciples: and this parallel is run in such manner as to put it beyond a reasonable doubt, that Adam was a covenant head in the fall, and Christ a covenant head in the redemption and restoration of man. In a word—and that the word of inspiration—“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

Farther.—Observation on the actual state of the world demonstrates that there is much moral evil in it. This is not denied as a fact, by any but atheists. It is readily admitted by many of those who deny altogether the prevalent tendency of our nature to evil,—which is to be particularly considered in a subsequent discussion. If mankind then are admitted to be actually in a state of depravity, and it be inconsistent, as heretofore shown, with all our ideas of the divine character and perfections, that man should have been originally formed by his Creator in a sinful or depraved state, it follows, that he is not now in the state in which he was originally formed. Without revelation indeed, we could not know that he fell from that state by his connexion with his first

parent as a federal head; but the fact that he is depraved, being ascertained by observation, the scripture representation that he fell in his original progenitor, is seen to give the best account that can be given of this mournful fact.

Let us now shortly consider the equity of this constitution. As it was the appointment of God, we know indeed before hand that it was perfectly equitable and righteous; because all the divine appointments certainly possess this character. We are, however, permitted humbly to investigate the Divine proceedings, and to discover, as far as we can, the ground on which they rest. In the particular before us, I am of the opinion that we can discover a part of the ways of God, and that a part must be resolved into his holy sovereignty.

We are acquainted with two orders of moral and dependent beings,—angels and men. Between these there is, in many respects, a wide difference, particularly in this—that angels were not formed to be propagated like men, in successive generations. Angels were all created at once, by the immediate agency of the Creator. Of the human race only two were formed at first, and from these all the rest have descended by ordinary generation. As all angels were created at once, each was capable of acting for himself, in the full maturity of his powers. Accordingly it appears that each did act for himself; that there was no federal head among them—that each individual stood or fell for himself alone. That it was otherwise in the case of man, seems to be a kind of necessary consequence of that law of his nature, by which each generation is derived from that which immediately precedes it, and all from the first. This law is not peculiar to man, but extends to all animals, and even to all the vegetable tribes. It is an invariable law of the whole, that like shall produce its like—that the offspring shall resemble the parent. On this law depends the preservation of that beautiful variety of beings which was at first created, and that knowledge of what we are to expect in their successive productions, so useful, if not essential, to our comfort and existence. Observe then, that Adam's being made the federal head of his posterity,

both standing and falling, was just one instance of this universal law of propagated beings,—that like shall produce its like. So that the question really comes to this, whether it was equitable for the Creator to ordain such a law, and to extend it to man?—and this is only, in other words, to ask whether it was equitable for Him to make such a world as he has actually made.

I am aware, my young friends, that what I have just been saying affords not a full solution of the difficulty before us. But I do think that presenting it under this aspect, affords some relief to a contemplative and humble mind. It shows that if Adam had not been the federal head of his posterity, there would have been an anomaly in creation—a violation of the law which the infinitely wise Creator has ordained for all propagated beings—that like shall beget its like. Think for a moment, that if Adam had retained his holiness, all his offspring would, like himself have been holy and happy. Would not this have been equitable! If it would, it must be equitable that his offspring should be unholy, when he became so. The principle is the same, however it may affect the actual condition of our race. If hereditary holiness and happiness would have been equitable, hereditary depravity and misery must be equitable also. Accordingly we are told in scripture, that after man fell, “he begat a son in his own likeness”—in his moral likeness, as well as in his bodily organization.

Let it farther be considered, that men were to be born in a state of infantile weakness. Now, during this state, would they, I ask, have been as competent to resist temptation, as Adam was in the perfection of his powers? It has been often said on this subject, and I think with truth, that every individual had a fairer prospect of a favourable issue to a state of probation, by being represented in Adam, than if he had stood for himself—That is, if he had stood for himself, he would have been far more likely to fall than Adam was. The high responsibility of Adam—the knowledge that he stood for his posterity—was doubtless a strong inducement to him

to maintain his integrity. In a word then, the whole remaining difficulty lies here—why, when Adam had fallen, was he not cut off at once, and not permitted to propagate a race of sinners? Here we are to bow to the sovereignty of God—Not however without having light enough to see, that he hath manifested his infinite goodness, as well as his sovereignty, even in this dispensation. On the continuance of a race of sinners—as I recently had occasion to remark—is grounded the whole plan and work of redemption by Christ: a work which will ultimately display the glory of God, more than any other; a work which will raise the redeemed of the Lord to higher happiness than they could have known, if they had not fallen: and a work which, notwithstanding the endless misery of those who perish, will probably produce an infinite counterbalance of happiness, in the moral and intelligent creation. On this subject, as well as on those points related to it, the remarks of the excellent Witsius, are as satisfactory as any thing I have met with. They may be seen in the last five sections of the second chapter of his treatise on “The Economy of the Covenants.” They expand and illustrate the ideas which I have now suggested; and such of you as may have the opportunity may read them with advantage—We have not time to repeat them at present.

Having shown that Adam was the covenant head of his posterity, and likewise considered the equity of this appointment, it may be proper to say a few words on the manner in which a corrupt or depraved nature has been transmitted from one generation of men to another—from Adam to the present time. Nothing that I have ever seen on the subject—and much has been written on it—has appeared to me so pertinent as the following remarks of Dr. Witherspoon; and I only regret that he has not given more expansion to the few important and judicious observations which I shall now repeat. He says—“As to the transmission of original sin, the question is to be sure difficult, and we ought to be reserved upon the subject. St. Augustine said, it was of more consequence to know how we are delivered from sin by Christ,

than how we derive it from Adam. Yet we shall say a few words on this topick. It seems to be agreed by the greatest part, that the soul is not derived from our parents by natural generation; and yet it seems not reasonable to suppose that the soul is created impure. Therefore it should follow, that a general corruption is communicated by the body; and that there is so close a union between the soul and body, that the impressions conveyed to us through the bodily organs, do tend to attach the affections of the soul to things earthly and sensible. If it should be said that the soul, on this supposition, must be united to the body as an act of punishment or severity, I would answer, that the soul is united to the body as an act of government, by which the Creator decreed that men should be propagated by way of natural generation. And many have supposed that the souls of all men that ever shall be, were created at the beginning of the world, and gradually came to the exercise of their powers, as the bodies came into existence to which they belong."

Agreeing, as I do fully, with what is here stated, I shall do nothing more than enlarge a little, on the ideas suggested in the quotation. You will carefully observe then, that it is stated, that this is a difficult point in theology, and of course that we ought to be reserved in speaking upon it. Wherever scripture is silent, it is best for us either to be silent too, or else to speak with great diffidence and caution; and to lay down nothing that we would propose as a matter of faith, but only as a speculation, in which the mind may indulge as offering a solution of some difficulty, and which we may receive as probable, but not as certain. Now I think the scripture is entirely silent on this very point. It offers us, as we have seen, abundant evidence of the fact, that guilt has been transmitted; that a depraved nature has descended from Adam to us, and will continue to be transmitted to the end of time. But I am not able to recollect a single passage of scripture, which professes to explain the mode, or method, in which this depravity is transmitted; or to give any clear information on the subject, beyond what has been already men-

tioned, that the posterity of Adam resemble their first parents—*How* the moral, or rather immoral tendencies of our nature, are communicated from parents to children, is a thing scarcely, if at all, touched upon in the sacred volume. If it be alluded to in a passage which I shall presently cite, it is not explained. This then is another point of the same character with several heretofore mentioned; in regard to which it would seem to be the plan or system of the Bible, *not to speak*. It always speaks plainly and fully in relation to facts and duties; but it rarely says any thing in explanation of abstruse theories, or of the manner in which things of this sort take place. Facts and duties we need to know, that our hearts and lives may be influenced by them. Theories principally serve to gratify curiosity; and to such gratification inspiration seldom ministers. Frequently no doubt it is silent on such topicks, because we either are not capable at present of understanding an explanation, or it is best that we should not have it.

Again—Although the scripture does not tell us *how* the depravity of man is transmitted from parents to their offspring, it says enough, I apprehend, to show, agreeably to the remark of the author quoted, that the soul is not derived from our parents, like the body, and that the soul is not created impure. The scripture gives us abundant and unequivocal evidence, that the soul may and will exist, separately from the body—Of course, the soul is not a part of that material organization which we derive from our parents, and which at death returns to the dust. On the whole, as the quotation recited intimates, if we must speculate and form a theory on this subject, the safest and most rational is, to suppose that all souls were created at the beginning of the world; that they remain inactive, till the bodies which they are to inhabit are formed; that on union with these bodies, they receive all their original impressions by means of the external senses; that the whole system of the bodily appetites and propensities, with the fancy or imagination which is closely connected with them, having become irregular, excessive and

perverted, by the fall, do unavoidably and immediately corrupt the soul, and enslave it to sin. This appears to me safe as a theory, and far more rational than either the system of the materialists, or that which supposes the unceasing creation of souls. So far as it relates to the manner in which the soul is corrupted by the body, it seems to me to coincide with the numerous expressions of St. Paul—perhaps to be countenanced by those expressions—in which a *carnal* or *fleshly mind*, is put for *human depravity*. By this apostle, the whole embodied principles of sin are emphatically denominated *the flesh*—“*The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*” For some reason or other, the *flesh* is here represented as the *source and seat of sin*.

It now only remains to consider that part of the answer before us, which affirms that “all mankind sinned in Adam,” as well as “fell with him in his first transgression.” The meaning of this is, that each individual of the human race stands charged, in the sight of God, with having transgressed the divine law in Adam’s first sin. This indeed naturally and unavoidably follows, from Adam being a *covenant head*. The essence of that relation consisted in this very thing, that his act was to be viewed and treated as the act of each of those whom he represented, so that they are to be considered as individually acting with him—as a part of himself—in the original transgression. President Edwards has illustrated this last idea with great ingenuity in his treatise on Original Sin. You will be careful, however, to remark and remember that this relates only to the first sin of Adam, in eating the forbidden fruit—all his subsequent sins had no more relation to his posterity than the sins of any other individual. But in his first sin—in transgressing by eating the forbidden fruit—he was the representative of his race.

To the whole statement that has now been given many objections, we know, have been made; but all the answer which I think necessary to return to them, has been given already,

in showing that it was an equitable, yea, to us, a favourable dispensation, to constitute Adam the federal head of his posterity;—for his being a federal head consisted, as just now remarked, in this very thing. It stands on the same ground—and it is so represented by the apostle—as our justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ. “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners: so, by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.” In the first Adam we were losers, in the second our gain is infinite.

As to the fact, that every individual of the human race is accounted a partaker of Adam’s guilt, it is expressly taught in that often repeated passage—“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” There is really no avoiding the point in question, in construing these words in connexion with their context. The very scope, pith, and force, of the apostle’s whole argument is, that all men die because all have sinned—and sinned in Adam. The case of infants, “who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression,” is distinctly stated and considered. They die before they are capable of actual sin, because they sinned in their federal head and representative.\*

\* While we have been reviewing these lectures for republication, a controversy has been going on in our country *on the nature of sin*. One of the parties in this controversy maintains, that there is, and can be, no sin, but that which consists in voluntary action—in the acts of choice of moral agents. This party at the same time admits, that there is a period during which infants are not moral agents; and of course, to be consistent, strenuously maintains that while this period lasts, infants are entirely without sin. “Why then—asks the other party—do infants die? And are they saved through the death of Christ?” To the first of these questions the answer returned is—“brutes die also.” On this we remark, that if man had not sinned, we have no reason to believe that even brutes would have died *as they now do*—often with *extreme pain and protracted misery*, after a life of almost incessant suffering from the cruelty of man. In what manner they would have continued their existence, or have returned to their native dust, revelation has not informed us, and therefore we cannot know. We can conceive that they might have died as they now fall asleep—with pleasure, rather than with pain. We think we may fairly conclude, that neither in life nor in death, would their existence have been productive of pain; because the apostle teaches us, that all the pain there is in our world is the consequence of man’s sin—Rom. viii. 22. “We know that the whole creation [*πάσα ἡ κτνση*, every creature] groaneth and travaleth in pain together until now:” And the context shows that the whole of this is the bitter fruit of human transgression. It is no satisfactory answer, then, to say, that infants suffer as brutes suffer; when sin is the cause that both suffer. It is still true that infants suffer and die as a penalty for sin—for sin

And truly, my young friends, if we reject this doctrine, the difficulty remaining will not be less, but greater. That infants do often suffer the most agonizing pain and distress, ending in death, is just a stubborn fact which no one can deny. Now, it is agreed on all hands, that they have no actual sin. If then they do not suffer in consequence of their connexion with a sinful progenitor, why do they suffer? They must suffer without any fault, either personal or federal: That is, their Maker subjects them to these agonies, without any moral delinquency—without any just cause. To say this, is a direct impeachment of the justice and goodness of the ever blessed God. It is therefore far the less of the two difficulties—if a difficulty it be esteemed—to believe that they are considered and treated as having sinned in Adam, than to believe that they are treated thus, without any moral stain, either of their own contracting, or derived from their parents. To say that they derive only a suffering and dying nature from Adam, and must submit to the law of the nature which they now possess, affords no explanation, or relief at all: For this suffering and dying nature is *itself* the fruit of sin,—the very bitter fruit of which we are speaking, and of which, on this supposition, they are made to taste in a most distressing manner, without defection or culpability of any kind whatsoever.

which they have not yet been able to commit, “after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.”—They must therefore be considered as having “sinned in him,” as our Catechism teaches, and as President Edwards has ably and satisfactorily shown. Whatever may be said of brutes, we know that the oracles of infallible truth teach, in regard to man, that “the wages of sin is death”—The death of every human being was intended to mark and proclaim him a sinner. Yet according to this new theory, death is inflicted on myriads of the human family, as free from sin as Adam was immediately after God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” Is it not “astonishing to what shifts men will resort, to support the doctrine” that all sin “consists in man’s own act of CHOICE.” In regard moreover to the admission of these *sinless infants* into heaven, it is distinctly stated, that “the only ground on which it can be hoped for is that ATONEMENT of Christ, by which the moral government of God has been sustained; the influence of the Holy Spirit, secured for the sanctification of God’s elect; and the unfading glories of heaven laid open to those who, through grace, are made heirs of eternal life”—That is, “a distinguished writer of the nineteenth century has taught” that an *atonement* has been made for those who have *never sinned*; and the Holy Spirit *sanctifies* those who have never become *unholiness*; and heaven is obtained *through grace*, by those who have *never forfeited the favour of their Creator*!!

You see then, that the scripture doctrine, that every individual of the human race sinned in Adam, is not only true in itself, but less difficult than any other. I speak this, my young friends, most deliberately. I have examined the subject before us long and closely—And I assure you on full conviction, that if you turn blank infidels and throw away your Bibles; or if you turn hereticks, and deny altogether the doctrine of original sin, you will not only act wickedly, but you will then have more formidable and insolvable difficulties to dispose of, than are found in the creed of any orthodox Christian. The orthodox faith is in this, as in many other particulars, not merely the safest—it is the *easiest* and most *rational* faith.

In conclusion, then, I exhort you—

1. To fix and settle your faith on the point you have now heard discussed, on those grounds of scripture to which I have pointed your attention. Fix and settle it here, and then cease to muse on the difficulties which you may find attendant on the truth. To be constantly poring on these, is as unprofitable as it is unpleasant—That we are sinners is incontrovertible. The scripture tells us how our sinfulness originated. Let us receive what it tells, and here let our speculations end. Yet—

2. Let not your concern in regard to this subject, by any means, end with your speculations. No assuredly—but lay it closely and solemnly to heart, that in your natural state, you are depraved throughout. I would to God, my dear youth, that you did all feel as you ought to feel, on this subject. It would neither make you careless, nor sink you into despondency. It would make you anxious and earnest to have your natures renewed and sanctified, by the almighty energy of the Holy Spirit—to be “created anew in Christ Jesus unto love and to good.” Here is the only remedy—and blessed be God, it is an effectual remedy—for the deep pollution, the entire depravity of our fallen race. Betake yourselves therefore, without delay, to this remedy. Seek the renewing influences of divine grace; that being washed

and justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, you may be delivered from all the ruins of the apostacy, and be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

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## LECTURE XVIII.

*Into what estate did the fall bring Mankind?*

*Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto Man fell?*

*What is the misery of that estate whereinto Man fell?*

THE answer of our catechism next in order is the following—“The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.”

The chief design of this answer is to make the distribution of a subject, afterwards to be discussed. To say much upon it would only be to anticipate what is contained in the two subsequent answers. I shall therefore merely request you to observe the nature and manner of the statement made in this answer, which are—that the sin and misery brought upon mankind by the fall, are called an *estate*; that is, a permanent and invariable condition of existence, in which both sin and misery must be found by all the human race; and that sin is placed *before* misery, intimating that sin is the cause of misery, and misery the never failing consequence of sin.

These general truths are developed and illustrated in the two following answers, the first of which is thus expressed—“The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin, together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.”

Original sin has been usually distinguished, or divided, by divines, into original sin *imputed*, and original sin *inherent*. Original sin imputed, is the guilt of Adam’s first sin, consi-

dered as belonging to each individual of his posterity, and subjecting such individual to punishment or suffering, on that account. This point, with the objections to it, were treated at some length in the last lecture; and it is not my purpose to resume the subject at present.

Original sin *inherent*, is what is called in the answer before us,—“the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of our whole nature.” “The want of original righteousness,” says Fisher, “is the want of that rectitude and purity of nature which Adam had in his first creation; consisting in a perfect conformity of all the powers and faculties of his soul to the holy nature of God, and to the law that was written on his heart. And that all mankind are destitute of this original righteousness, appears from the express testimony of God, that among all Adam’s race ‘there is none righteous, no not one;’ and that ‘by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight.’ It follows, upon this want of original righteousness, that all mankind are, as it were, naked before God; and that their fig-leaf coverings will stand them in no stead, before his omniscient eye, nor answer the demands of his holy law.”

But original sin consists not in mere privation, or in a *want* of original righteousness. It consists also in “the corruption of our whole nature;” in the universal depravation both of soul and body—in all the faculties of the one, and in all the members of the other. Let us trace for a moment the current of this corruption, through the faculties of the soul; not entering into much reasoning on the subject, but confirming what shall be said by plain declarations from the word of God.

Observe then, that the *understanding* of man, in his natural depraved state, is darkened and blinded; so that while this moral obscurity continues, he cannot know and receive the things of the Spirit of God.—“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned—Having the understanding darkened, being

alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."

*The will* of the natural man is depraved by sin. It is averse to the chief good; it is biased toward evil; it acts with hostility and rebellion against God. "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life," said our Saviour—"The carnal mind," says St. Paul, "is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

*The affections* of man, in his natural state are disordered, perverted and misplaced. They are set on trifling vanities and sinful pleasures; they attach themselves to ten thousand improper and forbidden objects; while they utterly refuse to be placed on God, as the supreme good. Their language constantly is—"Who shall show us any good?" that is, any earthly good. And they constantly lead every unsanctified child of Adam to "worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is God over all, blessed forever."

*The memory* of man partakes of the effects of his depravity. It is prone to retain what is vain and unprofitable, and to drop its hold on what is spiritual and truly advantageous. Hence the complaint of Moses; "Of the Rock that begat thee, thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee." This indeed was the frequent charge brought against the Israelites, notwithstanding the series of miracles that they almost constantly witnessed.—"They forgot the God of their salvation." But the charge is not confined to them. We find it mentioned as a general characteristick, of the wicked—that they "forget God;"—that "God is not in all their thoughts;" and experience abundantly confirms this truth.

*The conscience* of man is affected by his depravity. Sometimes it is violated till it becomes seared "as with a hot iron." But when this is not the case, it too often performs its office imperfectly; not reproofing and condemning when it ought, especially for secret sins. Sometimes it is so perverted that,

in the language of Scripture, it “calls evil good, and good evil; puts light for darkness, and darkness for light.”

In regard to *the body*, it was, you may remember, shown in the last lecture, that it is the body which is the instrument of corrupting the soul;—that in Scripture “*the flesh*” is represented as the seat and source of sin. It is in consequence of sin, that our bodies have become mortal—they are polluted and defiled in all their members. Hence the apostolick caution—“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.”

Thus you perceive that the corruption of our *whole nature* is most apparent; that it is impotent, and even hostile, to whatever is holy or spiritually good, and strongly inclined or biassed to what is evil. Of unrenewed man, it has been as true in every age of the world as it was before the flood, “that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually.” But in opposition to the statement you have now heard—to the doctrine of our catechism, and to what I think has been clearly shown to be the doctrine of scripture—there are those who contend that the tendency of our nature is to *good*, rather than to evil. In a conversation I once had with an individual of some shrewdness, who cherished this sentiment—the sentiment that children, from the first, incline to good rather than to evil—I requested him to state on what ground he supposed that he could support his opinion. He affirmed that this opinion was, with him, the result of personal observation on his own children; who he did not suppose had a better nature than others. He said, that by instructing them carefully in their duty, by warning them constantly of the dangers to which they were exposed, and by admonishing them faithfully and tenderly, as soon as he perceived them going wrong, and by restraining them, while they were unable to judge for themselves; he had not failed to render them all, examples of correct behaviour and amiable deportment. He said nothing about genuine piety in his children; and I fear knew nothing about it in his own experience. I replied to him thus—By your own showing, it

required your vigorous and uninterrupted efforts to preserve, or to recall your children from wrong courses: but on the supposition that the tendencies of their nature were to virtue, rather than to vice, they should have gone right without any of these efforts; nay, they should have gone right, or of themselves speedily returned to what was right, even in opposition to endeavours to mislead them. - The man concerned, professed to be convinced of his error at once; and said he would not argue in opposition to the convictions of his own mind.

But alas! how often is it seen, that all the good instructions, all the seasonable advice and admonition, and all the influence of the best example, are wholly ineffectual, to form children even to an *external* regard to the laws of virtue, order and sobriety?—In opposition to all, how frequently do they become examples of flagitious vice? And even in those instances in which, by the Divine blessing on a good education and example, operating on a happy natural temperament, the young are formed to a fair and amiable *exterior*—how often is it evident, that they have still no *inward relish* for, but an utter distaste and dislike of, all *serious piety*, all holy exercises? It is then as evident from experience and observation as it is from scripture, that the tendencies of our nature are not to good, but uniformly and prevalently to evil. Indeed I am of the opinion, that in this, as in almost every other instance, an accurate observation on the state of the world, will be found one of the best commentaries on the word of God.

Whence, but from the natural and invariable corruption of the human mind, has proceeded that awful preponderance of moral evil, with which the world has at all times been filled? The tendencies of nature, however obstructed by incidental causes, will at last prevail. If these tendencies in the human mind had been naturally and preponderantly in favour of virtue, there would have been, at least some period, in which mankind would have been generally or prevalently virtuous, pious and holy. We do indeed look for such a period, but we look for it from the effusion of the Holy Spirit, to transform

the minds of men, and not from their melioration by any other cause. But such a period has never yet been witnessed. On the contrary, what is the history of the human kind? It is little else than the history of crime and guilt—of war, of fraud, of tyranny, of violence, of treachery, of oppression, of the means which one man, or set of men, have used to exalt themselves, by depressing, overreaching, or destroying their competitors. Nay, what are almost all the laws of society? Are they any thing but *guards* against the vices of men, which, but for these guards, would destroy society itself? Yes: every gaol, and every gibbet, and every law, is a monument, or a record, of the prevalent wickedness of man. Those codes of laws by which legislators and sages have immortalized themselves, serve to show how difficult it has been in every age, to guard effectually against the overwhelming torrent of human depravity.

I shall dismiss this topick, with a few remarks on the proper import of the phrase *total depravity*; because it is one that you often hear in religious discourse, and because it seems to be frequently misunderstood. It may be useful, I think, to state the import of this phrase, both positively and negatively. You will observe then, that by *total depravity*, we mean that *all* the human powers are depraved by sin, and that *every individual* of the human race, in his natural state, is destitute of *all holiness*: but we do not mean that all men are sinful *in the same degree*; much less that every man is *as bad as he can be*. There are many degrees of active malignity, and some unsanctified men are infinitely worse than others; if not naturally, yet as soon almost as comparisons can be formed. When therefore you hear the expression *total depravity*, used in the preaching of the gospel, or meet with it in the writings of the divines of our church, you are to understand by it—1. That all the powers of man, without exception, have been reached by this depravity; and in regard to moral subjects, are affected by it. 2. That this depravity has totally deprived man of that inward holy disposition, which is essentially necessary to the acceptable service of

God; so that this holy disposition will not be possessed till it be restored by the renewing influence of Divine grace. But 3. That it is by no means to be understood that every unrenewed man is, in temper, heart and disposition, as bad as he might be, or as some actually are. On the contrary, there is in many unrenewed men, not only a great sensibility of natural conscience, but a governing regard to those principles of equity, justice, humanity and benevolence, which render them amiable in domestick life, and highly useful and honourable, as members of political society. The young man who came to our Saviour, to inquire his duty, had such qualities as a man, that the Redeemer looked on him and loved him; yet he had no real and supreme love to God, but on the contrary, was supremely attached to the world. And hundreds and thousands of the same character, are now found under the light of the gospel.

Let us now consider, in the next answer of our catechism, the lamentable and appalling consequences of man's apostacy from God—"All mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever."

Awful indeed, my young friends, is the description here given, of the condition to which mankind are reduced by the fall. But since the description is as just as it is awful, let us attend to it carefully; let us consider it most seriously. It is by such attention and consideration, that we shall be most likely to escape ultimately, from the misery of that estate into which sin has brought us.

The first ingredient of this misery mentioned in the answer we consider, is *the loss of communion with God*—a loss and a misery indeed! Before the fall, Adam had the most delightful intimacy, the most pure and sublime intercourse with his Maker, in the uninterrupted enjoyment of his gracious presence. Of this he was instantly and totally deprived by the fall. He feared and fled from the presence of his God; and vainly attempted to hide himself among the

trees of the garden. From that unhappy hour till the present, man in his natural state has no desire after communion with his Creator. Indeed, on the ground of the covenant of works violated by sin, he is not permitted to approach his God: and though a new way of approach is opened, through the covenant of grace and the mediation of Christ, yet such is the awful and inveterate aversion of man's unrenewed heart to all intercourse with a holy God, that he constantly refuses it. The very recollection of the Divine presence is avoided, as much as possible. Hence the Psalmist's character of the wicked—"God is not in all his thoughts." Now this disinclination to communion with God, is equally the misery and the guilt of man. It is sensible nearness to God, and holy intercourse with him, which constitutes the happiness of heaven, and the highest pleasure of every saint on earth. But to all this, every unsanctified sinner is a total stranger—Thus does the delirium of sin render him hostile even to his own felicity.

The next ingredient of the misery induced by sin, which we are called to notice, is—"The wrath and curse of God." God is said in scripture, to be "angry with the wicked every day." It is also declared that "his wrath is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men;" that "he who believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." It is moreover "written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them." This is indeed very fearful language. Yet let us remember that it is the very language of the unerring oracles of God; and that it describes the infinitely miserable state of every sinner, till he is reconciled to God by Jesus Christ. Every such sinner, careless and gay as you often see him, goes from day to day under the curse of God's broken law, and with the divine wrath abiding on him; and bound over, to suffer the full penalty of his transgressions in his own person, so long as he continues to reject the offered Surety.

The next clause of the catechism tells us, that we are

"made liable to all the miseries of this life." These miseries are numerous and grievous, but too obvious to need to be dwelt on. Alas! who can tell what anguish of mind, and what torments of body, any individual of our guilty race may suffer, during his mortal existence! All mental agony—all fear, gloom, melancholy, horror, and black despair, all bodily sicknesses and diseases, all famines and pestilences, all war and devastation, all poverty and privation, all the convulsions of nature which precipitate thousands to instant and inevitable death—

"When earthquakes swallow, or when tempests sweep,  
Towns to one grave, whole nations to the deep"—

All these are the effects of sin. It is sin which has produced all this misery. But for sin, it would never have been permitted to exist under the government of a just and gracious God. Such indeed has been the misery produced by sin, even while life continues, that the man may be accounted fortunate who does not suffer more than the pains of death before he dies—Death itself, with two exceptions only, has been, or will be, the lot of all the descendants of Adam, till those shall be changed who are alive at the sound of the last trumpet. Yet to the wicked, all the miseries of this life, and the death of the body itself, are but the *beginning* of sorrows. After death they suffer, says the catechism, "the pains of hell forever?" In what these pains will consist we cannot fully tell. The loss of all happiness and all hope; exclusion from God—total and final; the horrors of a guilty conscience; the keenest remorse and cutting self reproach, will, no doubt, constitute the chief ingredients. The punishment of hell is represented in scripture by the subjects of it being cast into a prison—into the bottomless pit—into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth—into a lake of fire and brimstone, where the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; by the worm that never dies, and the fire that never shall be quenched; by the second death; and by the blackness of darkness for ever. These are no doubt to be considered as figurative expressions; but,

my young friends, they are figures full of horror. On the question—whether there will be material fire, or any thing that is material in future punishment?—I do not think that the scripture representations are decisive. Let us only be careful not to flatter ourselves, in the sentiments we adopt on this point, that the sufferings of lost souls will receive any abatement, by construing as figurative the language of inspiration; for beyond a question, the sufferings of the soul itself are in their nature the most intolerable of all.

What relates to the *duration* of future punishment, we have no reason to believe is figurative or hyperbolical—The punishment is certainly represented in scripture, as strictly endless—literally eternal. This is so evidently the doctrine of scripture, that all attempts to explain it away, I never could consider in any other light, than as utterly impotent, vain, and nugatory. Both in the Old Testament and in the New, the happiness of the righteous, and the misery of the wicked, are, as it were, weighed against each other, and declared, in point of duration, to be equal; so that you must deny or admit both—Here is the proof—Dan. xii. 2. “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to *everlasting life*, and some to shame, and *everlasting contempt*.” Mat. xxv. 46. “And these shall go away into *everlasting punishment*, but the righteous into life *eternal*.” In this last passage, our translators, to vary the language, have called the punishment of the wicked *everlasting*, and the life of the righteous *eternal*. But in the original there is no such variation—Precisely the same word is used in both cases. Literally it is—“These shall go away into *eternal punishment*, and the righteous into *eternal life*.” Here you perceive, the word of God has contrasted the future states of the righteous and the wicked, and declared that, as to their duration, they are equal. None doubt that the rewards of the righteous will be endless; and none, therefore, ought to doubt, that the punishment of the wicked will be endless likewise. Receive this solemn, awful truth, my young friends, and hold it fast. That the disbelief of it has an injurious

practical tendency, there can be no reasonable question. If the belief of endless punishment is insufficient fully to restrain the guilty, what must be the effect, when each individual is left to reduce it to such limits as his own self-flattery, and an inadequate sense of guilt, may dictate? Surely it cannot be the calculation of any rational mind to seek relief from fear, in any refuge but that which will yield a full security against "the wrath to come." Such a refuge, and such only, is the Lord Jesus Christ—"Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men" to hasten their flight to him. To him therefore—O to him—betake yourselves, without farther delay! United to him, you will be safe from the floods of interminable perdition, that will certainly overwhelm all who die in that state of sin and misery, in which we are placed by the primitive apostacy. Grant, O most merciful God! grant that none who now receive this warning, may neglect the great salvation, till the door of mercy be forever shut! Amen.

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## LECTURE XIX.

*Did God leave all Mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery?*

WE are now to turn our view from the ruin to the redemption of man; from the covenant of works, to the covenant of grace. It is the twentieth answer of the catechism which introduces this subject, in the following words—

"God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery; and to bring them into a state of salvation by a Redeemer."

In treating this answer, I will lead you to consider—

I. The fact asserted, that some of the fallen human race

were chosen, or elected by God, to eternal life; while some were left in their “estate of sin and misery.”

II. That this election is to be attributed solely to the “good pleasure of God,” as its cause.

III. That the election made was “from all eternity.”

IV. That a covenant of grace was “entered into” by God the Father with his eternal Son, as the head and Redeemer of the elect world.

V. That by Christ all his people “are brought out of a state of sin and misery, into a state of salvation.”

You are not to expect a long discussion on each of these points. The subject of the decrees of God, of which the decree of election is one, has heretofore been considered; and for this reason the less needs to be said at present—The general argument having already been laid before you, it would be superfluous to repeat it. My chief view in the distribution I have made, is to show you the method I shall follow in speaking to the answer before us; and thus to assist your after recollection of what shall be said.

I. Some of the human race were chosen, or elected, by God, to eternal life; while some were left in their “estate of sin and misery.” This is a doctrine of our church, which we believe is explicitly and unequivocally taught in scripture; and perfectly consonant with reason and observation. Among a multitude of scripture passages which might be, as they often have been, adduced in support of this truth, let the following suffice: Ephes. i. 4, 9, 11.—“According as he hath *chosen* us in him, *before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:—Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath *purposed in himself*:—In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being *predestinated, according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*” Rom. viii. 30.—“Moreover, whom he did *predestinate*, them he also *called*; and whom he called, them he also *justified*; and whom he justified, them he also *glorified.*”

2 Tim. i. 9.—“Who hath *saved us*, and *called us with an holy calling*, not according to our works, but *according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.*” These passages of scripture, my dear youth, are not perverted from the scope of the context—as is too often done in quoting scripture. They are quoted in their genuine spirit and meaning, as used by the inspired writers. And if they do not clearly tell us, that all those who are saved, were particularly chosen to salvation by God—while others were not so chosen—I do not know how language can express this doctrine. And all the comments and expositions which go to exclude this doctrine from scripture, when these and similar passages are brought into view, appear to me—although I acquit the writers of a design to pervert the word of God—so strained, harsh, and unnatural, that they do, in fact, confirm the doctrine which they seek to invalidate, as the real doctrine of inspiration. They show that the most ingenious glosses cannot make the oracles of truth plausibly speak another language. And upon what principle of reason or observation is this doctrine to be rejected? Men do not seem to startle at it so much, when applied to the angels. Those of them who fell, are left without a Saviour and without hope. The doctrine of election contemplates all mankind as sinners, deserving to die. If all deserve it, God’s showing mercy to some, certainly does no injury to others—They are not dealt with hardly. And from analogy, we have every reason to believe that as many are saved, as is consistent with the general purposes of God’s moral government.

II. Our second point is, that *the good pleasure of God*, is the only assignable ground of his electing some of the human family to eternal life. Those who know not how to deny this doctrine as a part of scripture, and who yet want a solution of it contrary, as we believe, to scripture, have said that God *foresaw* who would be disposed to repent and believe, and who would not; and that he chose, or elected, those who, as he foresaw, would believe—and left the rest.

But here, we think, is a complete inversion of the scripture order of causes and effects. In almost all the passages already cited, faith and other holy exercises are represented as *effects*, following the purpose of God, and not as the *cause* of that purpose. We choose therefore to refer election wholly to the sovereign purpose of God, operating on sinners, all of one character and of one desert; and to say, "even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." The sovereign acts of God are always infinitely reasonable in themselves; but in the mean time they proceed on reasons not known to us.

III. The choice which God made of his people was from eternity. This is the doctrine of scripture in the cited passages: And it is equally the doctrine of reason. It is contrary to the perfection of the divine nature, to suppose that the Deity has a succession of views and purposes. "He is of one mind, and who can turn him.—Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world." And to this place I have reserved the remark, that all who hold the doctrine of *efficacious grace*, and that it is this grace alone that makes one man differ from another, hold, in effect, the whole doctrine of election, as maintained by our church. Take for illustration a common case. Here are two persons, under the light of the gospel, who enjoy equally the means of grace—The one becomes pious; the other remains destitute of true religion. What makes them differ? You say, *the grace of God*—he gave his grace to one, and not to the other. And was it a purpose of the moment in the Divine mind, to give his grace to one and not to the other—a new purpose at the time he did it? Did not the Deity eternally purpose and know, that he would do this in time? You dare not deny it. If you do, you deny the foreknowledge and perfection of God. Here then is the whole of election which we hold—The gift of efficacious grace in time, to those on whom God eternally purposed to bestow it.

Or will you say that he gave equal grace to both; but the one improved it, and the other did not. For the sake of the

argument, let this for a moment be admitted. But then I ask —could he not have given grace that certainly would have been effectual, to him who remains without religion? You will not so limit God and his grace, as to say he could not. But he actually did not. He left the person in question without effectual grace—And here is all the doctrine of reprobation which we hold.

On the whole then, the Calvinistick doctrine on this subject is no more terrifick, or hard to be received, than that of many of those who often cry out against it and revile it. When I spoke on the general subject of predestination—of which, as I have already remarked, election is only a branch—I inculcated the duty of receiving truths, on sufficient evidence, which in theory we know not how exactly to reconcile and bring together. I showed you that we do this without hesitation in regard to other subjects, and that we ought therefore, in all reason, to do it also in religion. If any of you pervert this doctrine of election, so as to neglect the means of grace, or so as to keep you from acting as fully in the matter of your salvation like accountable creatures, as you would act if you did not believe it—nay, if you permit it to discourage you, and not rather to encourage you—then you will treat it as those do not treat it, who hold it most firmly and understandingly; and as the standards of our church warn you not to treat it. Leave the inquiry how the plan and purpose of God in this, as in all other things,—and in no respect more in this than in other things,—is to be reconciled with the freedom of moral agents, and the influence of second causes. They are undoubtedly, reconcilable, for they are both truths; but to discover and explain how these truths exactly coincide, is probably beyond the human powers in the present state. Do obvious duty, and use appointed means; and if you become interested personally in the covenant of grace, by accepting the Saviour, then you may find that this very doctrine, so far from being offensive, is full of sweetness and comfort.

We now proceed to consider—

IV. That a covenant of grace was made by God the Father with his eternal Son, as the head and Redeemer of the elect world. This, according to a passage already quoted, was before the birth of time; before men or angels were formed—even from everlasting. *Then*, in foresight that man when created would fall—in the council of peace between the Father and the Son—a number of our race, considered as fallen sinners, were chosen in Christ, or were given to the Son, to be redeemed by him—he voluntarily choosing to undertake the whole work of redemption in their behalf.

This topick is so well explained and so accurately expressed by Witsius, in his justly celebrated work called *The Economy of the Covenants*, that I will give you a general view of it, in some extracts from the English translation of that masterly treatise.

“If any thing ought to be accounted worthy of our most attentive consideration, certainly it is the covenant of grace, of which we now attempt to treat. Here the way is pointed out to a paradise far preferable to the earthly, and to a more certain and stable felicity than that from which Adam fell. Here a new hope shines upon ruined mortals, which ought to be the more acceptable, the more unexpectedly it comes. Here conditions are offered, to which eternal salvation is annexed: conditions, not to be performed again by us, which might throw the mind into despondency; but by him who would not part with his life before he had truly said, *It is finished*. Here, with the brightest splendour, shine forth the wonderful perfections of our GOD; his wisdom, power, truth, justice, holiness, goodness, philanthropy, or good-will to man, mercy—and what tongue can rehearse them all? never before displayed on a more august theatre, to the admiration of all who behold them. Whoever therefore loves his own salvation, whoever desires to delight himself in the contemplation of the divine perfections, must come hither, and deeply engage in holy meditations on the covenant of grace: which I think may not improperly be thus defined—

“*The covenant of grace is an agreement between God*

*and the elect sinner; God declaring his free good-will concerning eternal salvation, and every thing relative thereto, freely to be given to those in covenant, by and for the sake of the Mediator Christ; and man consenting to that good-will by a sincere faith.*

“ That the nature of the covenant of grace may be the more thoroughly understood, two things are above all to be distinctly considered. 1. The *compact* which intervenes between *God the Father*, and *Christ the Mediator*. 2. That *testamentary disposition*, by which *God bestows*, by an immutable covenant, *eternal salvation*, and every thing relative thereto, upon *the elect*. The former agreement is between *God and the Mediator*; the latter between *God and the elect*. This last presupposes the first, and is founded upon it.

“ When I speak of the compact between *the Father* and *the Son*, I thereby understand *the will of the Father*, giving *the Son*, to be the *Head* and *Redeemer* of the elect; and *the will of the Son* presenting himself as a *Sponsor* or surety for them; in all which the nature of a compact and agreement consists. The scripture represents *the Father*, in the economy of our salvation, as *demanding the obedience of the Son* even unto death; and for it promising him that name, which is above every name, even that he should be the head of the elect in glory: but *the Son*, as *presenting himself* to do *the will* of the Father, *acquiescing* in that *promise*, and in fine, requiring *the kingdom and glory promised* to him.

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“ Christ himself speaks of this compact in express words.\* Καγὼ διατίθεμαι ὑμῖν, καθὼς διεθέτο μοι ὁ πατήρ μου βασιλείαν. And I engage by covenant unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath engaged by covenant unto me. In which words the Lord Jesus says, that by virtue of some covenant or disposition, he obtains a kingdom, as we also obtain it by virtue of the same.

“ And Heb. vii. 22, where he is said to be *κρείττονος διαθηκῆς*

\* Luke xxii. 29.

*εγγυός, a surety of a better covenant or testament.* But he is called the Surety of a testament, not principally on this account, because he engages *to us for God* and his promises, or because he engages *for us* that *we shall obey*; as Moses intervened as a surety between *God and the Israelites*.\* For by how much Christ was greater than Moses, in so much he was also a surety in a more excellent manner. His suretiship consists in this, that *he took upon himself to perform that condition*, without which, consistently with the justice of God, the grace and promises of God could not reach unto us; and which being performed, they were infallibly to come to the children of the covenant. Unless then we would make void the suretiship of Christ, and gratify the Socinians, the very worst perverters of the scripture, it is necessary we conceive of some covenant, the conditions of which Christ took upon himself; engaging in our name with the Father, to perform them for us; and which, having performed, he might engage to us for the Father, concerning grace and glory to be bestowed upon us.

" Moreover,† Paul mentions a certain διαθήκη, covenant, or *testament*, that was confirmed before of God in Christ. Where the contracting parties are on one side *God*, on the other *Christ*; and the *agreement* between both is ratified. But lest any should think, that Christ is here only considered as the *executioner* of the *testament* bequeathed to us by God, the apostle twice repeats, that *Christ was not promised to us*, or that *salvation was not promised to us through Christ*, though that be also true; but that *the promises were made to Christ himself*.‡ That *Christ was that seed, ον επηγγελται, to which he had promised, or to which the promise was made*; namely, concerning the inheritance of the world, and the kingdom of grace and glory. It is evident therefore, that the word διαθήκη does here denote some *covenant or testament*, by which something is promised by God to Christ. Nor do I see what can be objected to this, unless

\* Exod. xix. 3—8.

† Gal. iii. 17.

‡ Gal. iii. 16.

by *Christ* any one should understand *the head*, together with *the mystical body*, which with Christ is that *one seed*, to which the promises are made. This indeed we shall very readily admit, if it also be admitted that Christ, who is the head, and eminently the seed of Abraham, be on no account excluded from these promises, especially as the promises made to his mystical body, ought to be considered as made also to himself; since he himself too *hath received gifts for [in] men*.\*

“Nor ought those places to be omitted, in which explicit mention is made of the *suretiship* of Christ; as Psal. cxix. 122. *Be surety for thy servant for good*; that is, as surety receive him *into* thy protection, that it may be well with him. In like manner, Is. xxxviii. 14. *I am oppressed, undertake for me*; be to me a surety and patron. And that none but Christ alone could thus undertake, God himself says, Jer. xxx. 21. *Who is this that engaged [in] his heart*, or quieted his heart by his suretiship, or *sweetened his heart*, by a voluntary and fiducial engagement, or, in fine, *pledged his very heart*, giving his soul as both the matter and price of suretiship (for all these are comprised in the emphasis of the Hebrew language) *to approach unto me*, that he may expiate sin? These words also point out what that suretiship or undertaking was, which David and Hezekiah sought for; namely, a declaration of will to approach unto God, in order to procure the expiation of sins.

“In fine, we may refer to this point, what is to be found, Zech. vi. 13. *The counsel of peace shall be between them both*; namely, between the *man*, whose name is *the Branch*, and Jehovah: for no other pair occur here.

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“I consider *three periods*, as it were, of this compact. Its commencement is to be sought in *the eternal counsel* of the adorable *Trinity*; in which *the Son of God* was constituted by *the Father*, with the approbation of *the Holy Spirit*, the Saviour of mankind, on this condition, that in the fulness of

\* Psalm. lxviii. 19.

time, he should be made of a woman, and made under the law; which *the Son undertook* to perform. Peter has a view to this when he says,\* that Christ *was foreordained before the foundation of the world*. To this purpose is also, what the Supreme Wisdom testifies concerning itself,† *I was set up [anointed] from everlasting*; that is, by my own and the will of my Father, which is one and the same, I was appointed to the performance of the mediatorial office in time. Paul likewise declares, that *we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world*.‡ Consequently, Christ himself *was constituted from everlasting, the head of those that were to be saved* and *they were given unto him*,§ for whom he was to merit salvation, and in whom he was to be glorified and admired. From this constitution, the Son from everlasting bore a peculiar relation to those that were to be saved. Hence the book of life is, by a special appropriation, ascribed to *the Lamb*,|| as containing a description of the peculiar people assigned to *the Lamb* from all eternity. Hence also it was, that God, in his amazing wisdom, so ordered many things in man's state of innocence, that the attentive remembrance of them after the fall, and the comparing them with those things which were afterwards revealed, might have reminded man of this divine counsel.

“The second period of this covenant I place in that *intercession* of Christ, by which, immediately upon the fall of man, he offered himself to God, now offended by sin, actually to perform those things, to which he had engaged himself from eternity; saying, Thou hast given them to me, I will make satisfaction for them: and so making way for the word of grace to be declared to, and the covenant of grace to be made with them. Thus Christ *was actually constituted Mediator* and *declared* as such immediately after the fall; and *having undertaken the suretiship*, he began to *act* many things belonging to the offices of a Mediator. As a *Prophet*, and the interpreter of the divine will, he even then, by his

\* 1 Pet. i. 20.

+ 1 Prov. viii. 23.

† Eph. i. 4.

§ John xvii. 6.

|| Rev. xiii. 8.

Spirit revealed those things which relate to the salvation of the elect, and by his ministers published them.\* Nay, he himself sometimes appeared in the character of an *angel*, instructing his people in the counsel of God. As a *king*, he gathered his church, and formed to himself a people, in whom he might reign by his word and spirit. For it was the *Son* of God, who said to Israel, Exod. xix. 6, *Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests*, and who, with more than *royal pomp*, published his law on mount *Sinai*,† and whom *Isaiah* saw sitting as *king upon a throne*.‡ As a *Priest*, he took upon himself the sins of the elect, *to be expiated by the sacrifice* of his body, which was to be fitted for him in the fulness of time. In virtue of this, as being a faithful surety, he likewise *interceded* for the elect, by declaring his will, that they might be taken into favour, saying, *Deliver them from going down to the pit, I have found λυτρόν, a ransom.*§ For what *angel* could speak thus, but the *angel of the covenant?* who even then was called *an angel*, before his coming in the flesh, because he was accomplishing what depended upon that future mission.

\* \* \* \* \*

“The third period of this compact is that, when on his assuming human nature, he suffered his ears to be bored;|| that is, engaged himself as a voluntary servant to God, from love to his Lord the Father, and to his spouse the church, and his spiritual children (for the ears of such voluntary servants were bored;)¶ γενομένος ύπο νομού, was made under the law,\*\* subjecting himself to the law: which he solemnly testified by his circumcision, on the eighth day after his birth, whereby he made himself a debtor to do the whole law.”††

Thus it clearly appears, that there was a covenant between the Father and the Son, in which he undertook to be, in all

\* Isa. xlvi. 15. 1 Pet. i. 11. and iii. 19.

† Acts vii. 38.

‡ Chap vi. compared with John xii. 41.

§ Job xxxiii. 24.

|| Compare Psalm xl. 7. with Heb. x. 5.

¶ Exod. xxi. 5, 6.

\*\* Gal. iv. 4.

†† Gal. iii. 3.

the extent of the word, *a Redeemer* of the people who, in that covenant, were given to him.

It only remains to remark,

V. That by Christ all his people are actually brought out of a state of sin and misery, into a state of salvation.

You will not understand that I now propose to go into a particular explanation how this is done. A large part of the subsequent answers in the Catechism is employed in explaining these topicks, and to anticipate them would produce confusion. Let us then only dwell for a few moments on *the fact*, that Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God, is the great agent in the work of our redemption, and that he has perfected it in behalf of his people.

In virtue of his undertaking for them, he is made “head over all things to the church, which is his body.” There is no gift of grace or glory bestowed on the church, or on any individual member, but it is, as it were, first given to Christ, and then comes to the believer from him—“Of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace.” It was for this purpose that “it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.” As the people of Christ are given to him, and he gave himself for them, it is infinitely fit and reasonable, that they should receive all immediately from him. And this is calculated unspeakably to encourage and comfort them, while they are permitted and required to look for all that they need, from the hands of their kinsman Redeemer, who has identified himself with them: and they also hence receive every possible assurance that the work of their redemption and salvation has been fully wrought out for them, shall be effectually wrought in them, and shall be completed in eternal glory and felicity;—because the whole has been engaged for by God’s eternal Son, whom no enemy can resist or disappoint.

The efficacy of this work of Christ, was just as great, although not so clearly revealed, before his coming in the flesh as afterwards. It is the prerogative of God, to call things that are not as though they were. Christ was “the lamb slain from

the foundation of the world.” The efficacy of his undertaking and atonement, was coeval with the fall of man. He was promised to our first parents as “the seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent’s head.” His character and his atonement were shadowed forth under the Mosaick dispensation, by a variety of symbols and sacrifices—These all pointed to Christ and his sacrifice; for the apostle expressly declares, “they were a shadow of good things to come, but the body was of Christ.” To Christ, therefore, all who are saved, the ancient and the modern, the Jew and the Gentile, the infant and the aged, owe entirely and equally, their redemption and their eternal inheritance.

Two short reflections on what you have heard, shall close this lecture.

1. Reflect on the self-moved goodness, mercy and condescension of God, in the covenant of grace. On this let me counsel you to dwell in your meditations, more—far more—than on the inscrutable decrees of Jehovah. To *Him*, those decrees—those “secret things—belong;” while to *us*, it belongs to wonder, admire, adore and love, in attentively contemplating the “revealed” truth, that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” Remember, I repeat it, that this is plain revealed truth; in which the benignity of God, manifested to our world, is exhibited as inconceivably great. He “so loved the world,” that “he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all;” and this when we were hardened and unrelenting rebels against Himself. This is indeed benevolence, compassion, and a stoop of mercy, without any parallel—with any thing to which we can even resemble it. Those who oppose our sentiments, often represent us as exhibiting the ever blessed God as an arbitrary, inexorable, and vindictive Being—Nothing can be farther from the truth. We do indeed plead for all the Divine attributes, and are careful not to deny

one in order to establish another. Hence we maintain the perfect foreknowledge and entire sovereignty of God, that we may not impeach his wisdom, nor derogate from his supreme disposing power. But at the same time, we maintain the infinite goodness of God. We believe with the apostle John, that "God is love." We represent this love as the first spring and source of the whole plan and work of redemption—that it was the inconceivable love of God that provided the Saviour, and "gave him up," to all that he endured in the work of our redemption. If our opponents will represent this part of our system as inconsistent with the other—we will ever deny it; and reply, *that is your consequence, not ours.* We believe, and so do you, that many of the ways of God are unsearchable. We believe that the things in question are perfectly reconcilable, although for the present we cannot tell *how.* We believe, from the word of God and the dictates of reason, facts and truths which we cannot fully reconcile. But we will not deny any of the facts or truths, because we cannot show exactly how they quadrate with each other. But on the fact that God is love, and the fountain of all goodness, grace, and mercy, it is our delight to dwell. We love to contemplate it by itself; yea, we love to inculcate it, till our own minds, and the minds of those we address, are filled with admiration, and glow with gratitude and affection, to the infinitely best as well as greatest of all beings.

2. Reflect on our infinite and endearing obligations to the Saviour. When "there was none to help—none to uphold," then he said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." But for this intervention of the Saviour in our behalf—an intervention which was perfectly voluntary on his part, and to which he was under no obligation—but for this, the whole race of man, like the whole host of rebel angels, must have perished without remedy and without hope. What mortal can think of this, and not feel that his obligations to the Saviour are beyond all expression! But especially, when we consider the astonishing price of our redemption, and that the Saviour had a clear and perfect foresight of it—a perfect foresight of

the ineffable humiliation, sufferings and death, that would be indispensable in executing the undertaking for which he made himself responsible, and yet that he cheerfully assumed it, and steadily persisted till he had fully performed it—what tongue of men or angels, will ever be able to utter his love and compassion, or the endearing obligations which bind redeemed sinners to their great Deliverer! This doubtless will be a theme for the songs and harps of saints and angels, while the eternal bliss of heaven shall endure. And O! how hard, my dear youth, must be that human heart, how lost to every worthy sentiment, how base, how vile, which feels nothing—glows not, melts not, moves not with one pulse of gratitude and love—when this unutterable goodness, kindness, and compassion of the Saviour, is made the subject of contemplation! Is such the state of any heart in this assembly? If it be, how great must be the change wrought upon it, before it can be reconciled to God! May every such heart be shocked, and humbled, and tremble, at its vileness—may it be broken and bleed, that it may at length be healed by the application of the atoning blood of Christ.—Amen.

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## LECTURE XX.

*Who is the Redeemer of God's elect?  
How did Christ the Son of God become man.*

WE now proceed to consider the 21st and 22d answers of our catechism.

“The only Redeemer of God’s elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continues to be, God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person for ever—Christ the Son of God, became man, by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived, by the power of the Holy Ghost, in

the womb of the Virgin Mary, born of her, and yet without sin."

In discussing these answers it will, I think, afford as proper a method as any other, and the easiest to be remembered, if we take certain separate portions of the answers severally, and where necessary, connect those of the first with those of the second. In pursuance of this method, let us

I. Consider that the only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ.

You ought to know that the words *Jesus Christ*, although now used as a common appellation, were not given arbitrarily. They are, and were intended to be, descriptive of the character of our blessed Redeemer. *Jesus*, or *Joshua*, (for they are the same name in the original of the Scriptures,) denotes *a Saviour*, in the most peculiar and extensive sense of the term. Thus it was said—"thou shalt call his name *Jesus*, for he shall save his people from their sins." The term *Christ* in Greek, is exactly of the same import with *Messiah* in Hebrew. Each word, in its proper language, signifies *anointed*, or the *anointed one*. When therefore Peter said—"Thou art *the Christ of God*," it was the same as if he had said, thou art *the anointed of God*. Among the ancient Jews, kings, prophets and priests, were set apart to their office by anointing them with oil. Now Christ as mediator, united all these characters in himself, and is represented as set apart to them by the designation of God—So that the words *Jesus Christ* mean *the Saviour, anointed, or set apart to that office, by God*.

Jesus Christ is "the *only* Redeemer of God's elect." The Jews are yet looking for a Messiah to come. They will not allow that Jesus Christ was the true Messiah. But this is only a proof of their judicial blindness and hardness of heart; and is indeed the strongest proof that could possibly be given: For the character, actions and sufferings of our Saviour, are so exactly delineated and described by their own inspired prophets, that they are driven to the most unworthy shifts and evasions, to avoid admitting and allowing it. The prophecy in the 53d chapter of Isaiah, is more like a history than a

prediction: So much so indeed, that some of the early enemies of Christianity, insisted that it must have been forged, after the events to which it manifestly refers had taken place. But its reception all along by the Jews themselves, shows that the infidel objection is false; and thus one class of unbelievers is made to answer and confound another.

The prophecy of Daniel points so exactly to the time in which Jesus Christ did appear, that there could be no mistaking it as the epoch of the Messiah's advent: And it is a fact, as well ascertained as any in ancient history, that the whole Jewish nation, and even some among the neighbouring nations, were in full and earnest expectation of the Messiah at that very time—At that very time accordingly, the true and only Messiah, Jesus Christ, the anointed Saviour, did actually appear; and the expectation of another by the unhappy Jews, must forever be vain. But it is comfortable to think that their delusion will come to an end; and that when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in, they too shall yet acknowledge and obtain salvation, by that Jesus whom their fathers crucified, and whom they have so long and so wickedly rejected and blasphemed.—“There is salvation in no other, for there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

In the answers we consider, Jesus Christ is called “The Lord.” He is so called to denote his true and unquestionable Deity. It cannot be denied that our Lord is, in the Old Testament, called *Jehovah*, one of the peculiar names of the Deity, for which the Jews had the highest veneration. In a prophecy of Isaiah, which all Christians do and must apply to Christ, because it is expressly quoted and applied to him by John his forerunner, it is said, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” In the original it is, “prepare the way of *Jehovah*.” This naturally introduces another portion of the answers before us, namely, That the Lord Jesus Christ was “the eternal Son of God.”

When I discoursed to you on the doctrine of the Trinity, I gave what I consider as demonstrative scripture evidence,

of the proper Deity of each person in the Godhead: And I have just now mentioned incidentally, what is, by itself, a clear scripture proof of the proper Deity of Christ, the second person in the adorable Trinity. We shall not therefore resume this subject, with a view to consider it extensively,—I shall only make a few remarks on the *eternal Sonship* of Christ. All the most ancient creeds, or symbols of the Christian church, notice this point. The Apostles' creed, the Nicene creed, the Athanasian creed, the creed of the Synod of Calcedon, all either allude to it, or distinctly affirm and inculcate it. They distinguish carefully the Sonship of Christ, from all ideas of creation.—They represent him as the Son of God by a peculiar and mysterious relation; and affirm that he is of the same essence and eternity with the Father. This seems to be the scripture doctrine, although some modern divines, not in the least disposed to deny the divinity of Christ, have maintained that the appellation *Son of God*, is given to him only with respect to his mediatorial office. But as we are baptized in the name of *the Son*, as well as of *the Father and Holy Ghost*, it seems to follow that his Sonship is equally natural and necessary with the *paternity* of the Father, and the *personality* of the Holy Ghost. In a word, the *Sonship* and *personality* of Christ are the same, eternal in existence, and constituting the second hypostasis in the undivided essence of the glorious Trinity.

This adorable Being, the Son of God, the catechism affirms “became man;” that is, the second person in the Trinity assumed human nature into a perfect union with his own. This is technically called the *hypostatick union*. And after all the profane and foolish cavils which have been raised in regard to this subject, what is there in it which, however mysterious, is not easy of belief? To explain the mode or manner of it, we are indeed to make no attempt; and as little can they who cavil at it, and say they will believe nothing which they cannot comprehend,—as little can they explain how their own souls are connected with their bodies, and are operated upon by them. And surely, if we cannot explain a

union which exists in our own nature, it is not wonderful that we cannot explain one which exists in the nature of our infinite Saviour. What a monstrous arrogance is it to affirm, that the Son of God *could not* draw our nature into such a union with his own as to be one with it—one *person* and yet *both natures* distinctly preserved? There is certainly nothing here that is self-contradictory, nothing that is not plainly competent to infinite wisdom and power. Yes, and this union must be regarded as a glorious and unquestionable *fact*, on which our salvation rests.

The necessity which existed for the union of the divine with the human nature, in the economy of our redemption, shall be considered after we have attended briefly to the manner in which the human nature of our Lord was *prepared*, so to speak, for his assumption.

The catechism says “The Son of God became man, by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, born of her, and yet without sin.” It was absolutely necessary that the human nature of Christ should be conceived and born without sin; not only because it was to subsist in union with the person of the Son of God, but also because it was to be made a sacrifice for the sins of his redeemed ones; and must therefore be without blemish—having no sin or stain of its own, either natural or contracted, for which an atonement needed to be made. Such therefore was the human nature of Christ, the second Adam, as sinless and perfect as the first before the fall—Not descended from the first Adam by natural generation, but miraculously and immaculately conceived in the womb of one of *his descendants*. The grave and guarded words of Holy Scripture on this awful subject are—“The angel said unto her (Mary) the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

As it is only in this answer of the catechism that the virgin mother of our Lord is mentioned, let me remark, that

we are neither to worship her, nor degrade her. She was doubtless, by nature a sinner, like the rest of the human family; and was redeemed and saved by him to whose human nature she gave birth. On one occasion our blessed Lord even repressed her too great forwardness, in hinting to him that there was a call for the exercise of his miraculous powers. But that she was eminently a Saint; that her faith, and resignation, and absolute devotion to God, on the message of the angel, were most extraordinary and exemplary; that her relation to our common Saviour should render her name dear and venerable to us all; and that we should fulfil our part of her own prediction, that "henceforth all generations shall call me blessed,"—all this is not only to be admitted, but remembered and regarded. Alas! how do extremes produce each other, and how, by their doing so, are truth and duty every way injured? The religious worship which has been paid to the Virgin Mary is palpable idolatry. She was but a human being, and worship is due only to God. There is not one word in the holy scriptures to warrant, to encourage, or to colour the offering of religious worship to her; and if she herself can be conscious of it, she must perfectly disapprove it. Yet in counteracting this error, the veneration and affection due to her true character, has, I think, been sometimes refused, or impaired. Let us avoid both extremes. Let us worship God alone; but let us love and venerate all his Saints, and the mother of our Lord among the chief.

We are now to consider more particularly, that our Lord, in his human nature, had "a true body and a reasonable soul."

These words in the catechism, are levelled against certain errors which chiefly prevailed in remote periods of the church. "Marcion, Apelles, Valentinus, and many other hereticks, denied Christ's humanity, as some have done since. But that Christ had a true human body, and not a mere human shape, or a body that was not real flesh, is very evident from the sacred scriptures. He ate, drank, slept, walked, worked, and was weary. He groaned, bled, and died on the cross.

It is also as evident that he assumed our whole nature, soul as well as body. If he had not, he could not have been capable of that sore amazement, and sorrow unto death, and all those other acts of grieving, feeling, rejoicing, and the like, ascribed to him.”\* In simple suffering there is no sin. Without the least stain of moral pollution, therefore, our Lord might and did feel, all the innocent infirmities and pains of our nature—“He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

You will now distinctly remark, that it was with this *sinless human nature*, that the *eternal Son of God* united himself; so as to constitute *one person*. This union commenced at the instant when the human soul and body of our Lord were joined together; so that the same moment in which the soul was united to the body, both soul and body subsisted in personal union with the Son of God. This is not mere theory or conjecture. It is taught in the declaration of the angel to the virgin mother of our blessed Lord, and it was written for our learning—“That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” Christ Jesus, then, from his very birth, was the Son of God; that is, the divine was then perfectly united with the human nature, so as to make but one person. Hence it is that he is called “Immanuel, God with us”—God united with our nature.

Great care was taken by the ancient Christians, and it is also taken in our catechism, not to *confound the two natures* which met in Christ; and yet to assert with equal care, that they were *one person*. The Eutychians of old maintained, that the two natures were mixed and blended, so as to make but one nature. To guard against this, our catechism says—“two distinct natures.” But, on the other hand, the Nestorians maintained, that each nature was a person, or that he had two persons. To preclude this error, our catechism says he had but “one person,” and that this he will have “forever”—He had it on earth; he has it in hea-

\* Buck's Theological Dictionary.

ven ; he will have it to eternity. He *was, is, and will ever be*, God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person.

It is worthy of your careful observation and remembrance, that as there is but one person, although two natures, any act proper to either nature, may be attributed to the whole person. . This affords an easy and natural explanation of that remarkable passage in the Acts—"Feed the church of *God* which he hath purchased with *his own blood*." In this text there is attributed to the *divine* nature of Christ, what, in strictness, belonged only to his human nature; but as both natures were in one person, the blood of Christ is expressly called *the blood of God*—A text, by the way, which those who deny the divinity of Christ, can never explain or plausibly colour. Remember then, my dear children, that all that Christ did, or suffered, or continues to do as Mediator, must be considered as the *personal acts* of a being who was God and man united in one person; and that from this they derive their value and efficacy.

The way is now prepared for closing the doctrinal discussion of the answers before us, by stating, as was promised in the foregoing part of this lecture, the necessity which existed, for this union of the divine with the human nature, so as to make but one person, in Christ Jesus our blessed Lord. Here I shall be again indebted to the author already quoted,\* and yet shall not confine myself to his ideas and language.

It was necessary that the Mediator should be man, 1. That he might be *related* to those in behalf of whom he was to fulfil the offices of Mediator and Redeemer; that he might be our "kinsman," and we as it were be rendered *one* with him—"members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones." —2. That reconciliation might be made for sin in the same nature which had sinned. "For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself, likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil."

\* Buck in his Theological Dictionary.

—3. It was proper that the Mediator should be capable of obeying the law of God broken by the sin of man; and a person exclusively divine could not be subject to a law made for man, and yield obedience to it only—"God sent forth his Son, *made of a woman, made under the law,* to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."—4. It was necessary that the Mediator should be man that he might both suffer and die; for as God he could neither suffer nor die; and "without shedding of blood there was no remission."—5. It was fit that the Mediator should be man, that he might be qualified to sympathise with his people, under all their distresses, temptations and trials—"For we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin—For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."—6. It was indispensable that he should be a perfectly holy and righteous man, free from all sin, original and actual; that being in no respect a transgressor himself, he might be qualified and prepared to "offer himself without spot to God," take away the sins of those in whose behalf he made himself "a sin-offering," and be afterwards an advocate for them with the Father—"For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people; for this he did once, when he offered up himself."

Still it was not enough for the Mediator to be merely a man, although perfectly innocent and holy—It behoved him to be more than a man; yea to be very "God with us"—For 1. No mere man could, on such a footing as was proper and the case required, enter into covenant with God, and mediate between him and sinful man. For this, a being of a higher order than man was essentially requisite; a being who should be duly qualified to go between both parties—of-

fending man and his offended Creator—"Now a Mediator is not a Mediator of one, but God is one."—2. It was requisite that he should be God, that the *divine* might support the *human* nature, under the infinite load of wrath and suffering which he had to sustain, when he stood in the sinner's place; and that his divine nature might also give an infinite value and efficacy to what was to be done and endured in his human nature; and thus, that "he who knew no sin, being made sin for us, we might be made *the righteousness of God* in him."—3. It was necessary for the Mediator to be God, because, in the economy of man's redemption, all divine gifts and graces were to be treasured up in him, and by him, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, to be dispensed to his people—of whom he was to be the protector, ever present friend, final judge, and prevalent intercessor; and with reference to whom, he was to order all things in the world both of nature and of grace—"Lo," said he, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"—"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily—The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory—hath set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places; far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all—And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. The Father judgeth no man, but hath given all judgment to the Son—We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Thus have I shown you briefly, in a detail of particulars, each supported by a quotation from the unerring oracles, that it behoved the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Mediator of the new covenant, to be both God and man—Being thus *God-man*, he is, in every view, a perfect Mediator. Were he God and not man, we could not approach him but with fear and dread

—Nay, we could not approach him at all: for “God is a consuming fire” to the wicked. And were he man and not God, neither his obedience nor sufferings could be of any avail to recommend us to God; and we should be guilty of idolatry, if we either worshipped Him, or put our whole trust in him. But being what he is, he is exactly suited to all our wants. In the person of Jesus Christ, the object of our trust is, so to speak, brought near to ourselves. Those well known tender affections which belong to human nature, and which are only in the way of illustration ascribed to the Deity, are in our great Mediator literally realized. Hence it appears that the plan of salvation by him, is the most suitable to human beings that can possibly be conceived. And on the part of God it is not less suitable—By the obedience unto death of his only begotten and well beloved Son, the honours of his law have been completely restored, and all its demands most fully satisfied; so that he can now be just and the justifier of every one that believeth in Jesus; and so also that his glory is not only in all respects secured, but is displayed and made to shine, more illustriously than in all his other works. In a word, here it is that the declaration is verified—“Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”

Having now seen the perfect mediatorial character of Christ, it only remains to make an additional remark on a clause in one of the answers we consider, which has already been noticed in another view.

Observe then, that when it is said that the Lord Jesus Christ is, “the ONLY Redeemer of God’s elect”—the words may be considered as expressing the same idea that is contained in the declaration of the Apostle Paul, where he says—“There is ONE Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” As there is but “one Mediator” between God and man, you will readily perceive that any attempt to divide his mediatorial functions, and to give a part to saints or angels, as is constantly done in the Romish church, derogates from our blessed Saviour’s honour and office; and just-

ly subjects those who do it to the charge of impiety and idolatry. It is also to be remarked, that Christ Jesus mediates only “between *God and man.*” The fallen angels have no Mediator. They are left in a state of hopeless perdition—without a Saviour, and without the possibility of acceptance with God.

The result of all is, that through Jesus Christ, as God-man, Mediator, we have free access to the mercy seat of Jehovah. We have an atoning sacrifice, a powerful and prevalent intercessor, and God is reconcilable to us. Every hindrance is taken out of the way; he can honourably receive us; and the very chief of sinners is welcome and invited to return to the Father of mercies. His own people too, may at all times approach him with a holy boldness, and lay all their wants and desires before him, assured of a gracious audience and acceptance, through the intervention of their covenant and kinsman Redeemer.

Meditate, my young friends, on the doctrinal discussion of the important answers of our catechism, to which your attention has now been drawn—Meditate on what you have heard, not merely as a matter of speculation, but in the way of humble faith and devotion. In the former way, the meditation will do you little good; in the latter, it will be replete with the richest benefits—it will be found full of sweetness and comfort. Think

1. Of the wonderful nature of the facts to which these answers direct you. In speaking on the subjects of these answers, a pious writer asks—“What is the greatest wonder that the world ever saw? Answer—the incarnation of the Son of God. ‘The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us’—Two natures infinitely distant are united in one person. Astonishing, glorious, mysterious fact! Well might the inspired apostle in contemplating it exclaim—‘Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.’ ”

2. Think on the honour put upon our nature by Christ, and on the hopes which it inspires. The eternal Son of God “verily took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” By this unparalleled stoop of condescension on the part of our Redeemer, he has raised our nature to a dignity, in some respects superior to that of the highest angel. Our nature, which he assumed, he has carried with him to heaven, to the right hand of the Father; and there it is, and will forever be, united to his divine nature, while he receives the unceasing adoration and praise of the whole angelick host. If this subject were rightly considered, we should here find one of the strongest motives never to do any thing unworthy of human nature—unworthy of a nature which is assumed and worn by the coequal and coeternal Son of God. Let us, whenever tempted to sin, recollect that if we consent, we act most unworthily of the high relation which we are permitted to sustain to him whom angels worship, and at whose feet the heavenly host count it their honour to cast their crowns.

Especially may those who, by a genuine lively faith, have become identified with their Saviour—those in whose behalf, in his last intercessory prayer on earth, he petitioned his Father “that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me”—especially may all such cherish the assured hope that nothing in heaven, earth, or hell, shall ever separate them from their spiritual head—their dear and adored Lord. Amidst all their trials, temptations, and conflicts, they are still upheld by the arm of their Almighty Saviour, their kinsman Redeemer. They are so united with him, that they can no more perish than he can be plucked from his throne. Be it only their constant care to preserve clear and bright the evidence of this vital union, by the exercise of a lively faith, producing in them all the fruits of holy living; and then they will be entitled to rejoice with “a joy which is exceeding great and full of glory”—a joy

which will in a measure antedate heaven while they dwell on earth; and which shall, ere long, be consummated in the unutterable and inconceivable bliss of which they will partake, when they shall see their Saviour face to face, in the mansions which he has gone to prepare for them.

3. The wonderful preparation and provision which is made for the salvation of men, by the mediatorial character and work of Christ, should urge all those to whom this “great salvation” is made known, to seek it with the utmost earnestness and perseverance. How will any of *you* escape, my dear youth, if *you* neglect it? I know that, in regard to many of you, the character of the Saviour, and what he did and endured for your salvation, and the infinite importance of your obtaining a personal and saving interest in Him and his glorious work, were lessons taught to you, and inculcated on you, by your pious parents and friends, from the very time that your minds were capable of understanding these interesting topicks. You have often, very often since, heard them proclaimed and enforced in the preaching of the gospel. This evening you have been hearing of them again—And are there any of you, who, amidst all these unspeakable privileges and advantages, have, to this hour, remained unprofited by the Saviour’s mediatorial work? Ah! recollect, I beseech you, the high and awful responsibility which rests upon you. If you are not raised to heaven by a saving knowledge of Christ, the intellectual knowledge you possess, will sink you to the lowest hell. This tremendous truth it is my affecting duty to declare to you plainly: and I do it in hope, that under the divine blessing, it may urge you to speed your flight to the Saviour, before the door of mercy shall be forever closed. Avail yourselves then, while yet you may, of the gracious promise held forth to the young, in the scriptures of truth—“they that seek me early shall find me.” Amen.

## LECTURE XXI.

*What offices doth Christ execute as our Redeemer?  
How doth Christ execute the office of a Prophet?*

YOUR attention will be occupied in this lecture, by two answers of our catechism—The first is—“Christ, as our Redeemer, executeth the office of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation.”

This answer is chiefly to be regarded as introductory and preparatory, to the three which immediately follow it, in which the offices of Christ are distinctly and particularly explained. There are however some things, of a general nature, which may, with more propriety and advantage, be considered here than elsewhere.

You will observe then, in the first place, that it is in his *mediatorial character*, that our Lord Jesus Christ is to be considered as exercising *all* the offices which have been specified. The mediatory office of Christ may be considered as a *general one*, which he always and invariably sustains, and of which the others are only particular and constituent parts; that is, the office of mediator is never laid aside or suspended, but is always exercised by our Redeemer, when he acts as prophet, priest and king of his church.—“There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.”

Observe in the next place, that there is a clear foundation for these several offices of the great Mediator, both in the scriptures and in the reason and nature of things. This has sometimes been denied, and even treated with contempt; as if to speak of Christ as the prophet, priest, and king of his church, was no better than theological jargon. Nothing however can be farther from the truth than this. Christ was expressly predicted to the ancient Israelites under each of these characters; and he actually sustains them in the work of our

salvation. Moses foretold the coming of our Lord, under the character of a prophet.—“The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee *a prophet*, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me: unto him shall ye hearken.” Accordingly our Saviour was recognised as being he of whom Moses spake. When the people had seen one of his miracles, they said—“This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world :” and Peter, in the Acts, expressly applies the prediction of Moses to Christ.

Our Lord is also distinctly predicted as a priest, in the 110th Psalm—“The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedeck.” This prediction is quoted and applied to Christ by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews; and a considerable part of that epistle is employed, for the very purpose of showing in what a superior manner our Lord sustained and performed the office of a priest.

Again. In the 2d psalm, which is a continued prediction of the Messiah and his acts, Christ is represented as the anointed and reigning king of Zion—“I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” Under this character the Messiah was, and indeed still is, looked for by the Jews—sadly mistaking, as they did and do, the nature of his kingdom, in supposing he was to be a temporal, and not a spiritual prince. Hence it was, that on one occasion they were about “to take him by force, and to make him a king.”

You will be careful to notice that these offices of Christ, as mediator, relate to the state, character, and situation of mankind, *as sinners*—The nature of our salvation required that it should be revealed by him as a prophet; purchased by him as a priest; and applied by him as a king. His prophetical office, therefore, respects our ignorance; his priestly office our guilt; and his kingly office our pollution, defilement, and thraldom in sin: Accordingly, as a prophet he is made of God unto us wisdom; as a priest righteousness; as a king sanctification and complete redemption.

So also, in regard to the promises of God made to his peo-

ple—They are revealed by Christ as a prophet; confirmed by his blood as a priest; and effectually applied and fulfilled, by his power as a king.

And here it may be proper just to mention, that all these offices did never centre in any one person but in Christ alone—In order, as it would appear, to show the unequalled dignity of our blessed and glorious Redeemer, none of those who were typical of him, under the Old Testament, were ever clothed with them all. Melchisedeck was a king and a priest; Moses was a ruler and a prophet; Jeremiah was a priest and a prophet; David was a king and a prophet; but Christ alone was prophet, priest and king.

It is only necessary farther to remark on the answer before us, that Christ did and does execute these several offices, both in his estate of humiliation on earth, and in his state of exaltation in heaven. Having done on earth whatever these offices here required, he has gone to heaven, there to sustain them in the kingdom and temple of God above. The manner in which this is done, is explained in the three following answers—to the first of which we now proceed.

“Christ executeth the office of a prophet, in revealing to us, by his word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.”

The office of a prophet is, to reveal and teach the counsel and will of God. Of the nature of prophecy in general, it would lead me too far from the subject immediately before us, to speak particularly. Yet it is an important subject in itself, and does not occur again in the very compendious system of theology given in the catechism. In Buck’s Theological Dictionary, a work to which you may easily have access, under the word *prophecy*, you will find an extremely well written article, which I would recommend to your careful perusal. In the mean time, some leading ideas on the subject, will naturally mingle themselves in the discussion before us.

My children, we owe it entirely to our Lord Jesus Christ, in his prophetic character, that we have a Bible. “He exe-

cutes the office of a prophet, (says the catechism) by revealing to us the will of God for our salvation”—in the first place, “by his word.” The Holy Spirit, the third person in the adorable Trinity, is the immediate agent in making prophetic communications inwardly to the minds of men. Hence says the apostle Peter—“The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God *spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*”—But the blessed Spirit, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, is specially considered, in this work, as the Spirit of Christ. This is expressly taught, or affirmed, by the very apostle just quoted—Attend carefully to the following passage. “Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace which should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time, *the Spirit of Christ which was in them* did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” Here we see that it was *the Spirit of Christ*, which was in those holy men of God; who, in old time, spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

You must observe that there have been three dispensations of the covenant of grace, Patriarchal, Mosaick, and Christian. Revelations were made to prophets and holy men, from the very time of the first apostacy. We are not told of the precise manner in which a communication was made of the threatening and doom pronounced on the tempter, nor of the gracious intimation given to our first parents immediately after the fall, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head: Yet we are explicitly informed of the fact, that these communications were made; and we have reason to believe, as already observed, that the faith of our first parents in the intimation of a Messiah to come, was effectual to their salvation. We are expressly informed, in the New Testament, that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, was a prophet; and a part of his prophecy, or the subject of it, is given us. Divine communications, after this, were made to Noah, to Melchisedeck, to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to

Joseph, and it is probable to several others, till the time of Moses.

Moses was the most eminent prophet of the dispensation to which he has given name. He wrote the first five books of the Bible, which from their number are denominated the Pentateuch. He has given us the history of the creation, of the fall of man, of the antediluvian world, and of the church up to his own time. It is of no consequence to know, if it were possible to know—which it is not—how much of this early history Moses might be able to give from authentick tradition; which, before the use of letters and during the long lives of the antediluvians, was doubtless much more accurate than with us at present. That much of these things was then known by tradition to others, as well as to Moses, there is no reason to question. But we are sure that the history of the creation itself could not be known to any mortal, but by a revelation from God: And if revealed, as it no doubt was, to Adam, Moses, who wrote under the guidance of inspiration, was preserved from all error, in the account he gave both of this and of subsequent events. In whatever manner his information was acquired, whether by tradition or revelation, or both, the portion that has come down to us was just as much as God saw meet to be put on record. The whole, I repeat, was at least *verified* by an unerring revelation to Moses; so that all errors of tradition, if errors there were, were corrected; and an account free from all inaccuracy, was thus secured, for the use of the church to the end of time.

After Moses there was a succession of prophets—with some intervals between the death of one and the appearance of another—till the time of Malachi; which was about 400 years before the birth of Christ. Prophecy then ceased, till the time of John the Baptist.

In so common a book as Cruden's Concordance, under the word *prophet*, you may find an account of the order and times in which the prophets of the Old Testament appeared, and of the standing, as to authority, which they had among the Jews.

On these topicks, therefore, I shall not dwell. It may be proper however to remark, that there was a variety of ways in which prophetick communications were made to prophets, in every age. Sometimes it was by supernatural appearances, either of angels, as in the case of Abraham, Lot and Manoah; or of other accompanying miracles, as in the case of Elijah and others. Sometimes by an audible voice, as in the case of Moses at Mount Sinai, and of Samuel and Elijah, in other circumstances. Sometimes by extraordinary visions, as in the cases of Ezekiel, and the Apostle John. Sometimes by dreams, as in the case of Daniel and others. And most frequently of all, by inward illumination, and impulses.

No one will question that it is competent to the Deity, both to communicate his mind and will to his intelligent creatures, and to make them perfectly assured of the fact—so assured as to be under no danger and no possibility of deception—And all this was actually done in the case of all the ancient prophets. In whatever manner they obtained it, they had, it is manifest, *certain* knowledge that what they delivered was a message from God.

The testimony to be given to *others* that an individual spake under divine direction, consisted in working a miracle, or else in such a weight of previous unexceptionable character, or of publick prophetick office—for which numbers were educated in schools established for the purpose—as to leave no reasonable doubt that the message was indeed from God.

It may be proper to observe further, that almost the whole of the Patriarchal and Mosaick dispensations were, in a sense, prophetick. My meaning is, that the persons, types, symbols, and sacrifices of those dispensations, *foreshowed* the Saviour, and his character and work—That *they* as well as prophecy, were calculated and intended, not only to give assurance of the advent of Christ, but also to teach what he was to do and to effect.

At length Christ himself, the great prophet of his church appeared in the world; and spake as never man spake. Yet he recorded nothing with his own hand. The only authentick

information we have that he ever wrote, relates to the fact that "he stooped down and wrote with his finger on the ground." But the faithful record of many of his discourses and doctrines, as well as of his publick acts and miracles, is given us by the four evangelists, under the guidance of the Spirit of infallible truth.

After the death of Christ, Luke, who wrote the gospel which bears his name, penned also the *Acts of the Apostles*, containing a short history of the establishment of the primitive church. And several of the apostles, among the chief of whom was Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, gave a far more full and extensive exposition and detail of the Christian doctrines and principles, than it was proper to give during the life of our Redeemer. Some have been disposed to consider the writings of the evangelists, as of higher authority than those of the authors of the epistles. But there is no ground whatever for this distinction: all are of equal authority, for all were equally given by a plenary inspiration.

Last of all, we have "The Revelation" made to St. John; in which a prophetick view is exhibited of the state of the church, to the very end of time. At the close of this book an intimation is given, accompanied with an awful commination, that the canon of Scripture is complete—from which nothing is to be subtracted, and to which nothing is to be added. All subsequent pretensions to prophecy, therefore, are false and vain. Christ, as the great prophet of his church has, in that sacred book, THE BIBLE, revealed *all* that is necessary to salvation, and will never make an addition. And remember, my young friends that, as it all came *from* him, so it all points *to* him. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"—HE is the centre of all, and to lead us savingly to the knowledge and enjoyment of him, is the design of all. But in order to this, be careful to remember that you must be taught *inwardly by the Spirit of Christ*, as well as outwardly by his word. You perceive that *this* the catechism distinctly *affirms and inculcates*. It affirms that Christ, as the great prophet of his church, not only reveals his *word* for

salvation, but that he also reveals it to us, by his *Spirit*—The meaning is, not that he gives us personally any new revelation, but that he reveals to our *hearts* effectually, the spiritual import of the revelation contained in the Bible. To look, therefore, on the one hand, for any new revelation, is rank enthusiasm or presumption. And to expect, on the other, that the revelation given will save our souls, till it is effectually set home by the Spirit who endited it, is ruinous self-sufficiency and delusion.

The Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration the sacred scriptures were penned, opens the eyes of the human understanding to perceive the moral glory, beauty and excellence of divine truth, beyond any attainment ever made by mere learning or study, without this heavenly aid. The same Almighty agent also gives divine truth, when thus perceived, a *transforming* influence on the heart—agreeably to our Saviour's intercessory prayer, “Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.” “The entrance of thy words,” says the Psalmist, “giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple.” Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, inwardly revealing the truths of sacred scripture to the minds of men, the gospel method of salvation is seen to be so suitable, so excellent, so complete—so worthy of God and so desirable to the sinner—that language can scarcely express the perceptions which are then entertained; and the heart, at the same time, is most powerfully, but most sweetly persuaded, inclined and enabled, to fall in with and embrace the offered grace of the gospel. At different times, the various parts and passages of scripture are thus presented to the view of the mind; and with such evidence, force, and fitness to the wants of the believer, that the most happy practical effects are produced. Practical Christians, indeed, are those only who are acquainted with these blessed effects of revealed truth—effects which, after all reasoning, afford the fullest and most gratifying and satisfying conviction, that the source whence they are derived must be divine—that the scriptures are given by the inspiration of God. On the whole then, my dear youth, expect no new

revelation, nor credit any pretences that such a revelation has been received; but earnestly and constantly look to God, to reveal savingly in your understandings and hearts, by the power of his Spirit, the revelation which he has caused to be recorded in the sacred volume.

In concluding what I have to offer on this topick, it may be proper just to mention, that in reading pious writers on the subject of experimental religion, you will probably sometimes meet with the record of *inward impressions*, urging them to duty. In all such cases, it must be understood that the duty to which they were urged, was one clearly warranted by the written word—Otherwise, the impression must be regarded as altogether fond and delusive. The divine Spirit may, and certainly does, incline and draw us to the practice of Scripture truth, but never to any thing which is contrary to that truth, or inconsistent with it.

In concluding this lecture let me exhort you—

1. To meditate, with lively gratitude to God, on his great goodness in revealing to us his mind and will in “the lively oracles” of inspiration. Without these, all history shows that mankind, however otherwise improved or enlightened, have uniformly been polytheists and idolaters. How thankfully then ought we to receive those blessed communications, which a gracious God has been pleased to make by his Son, through his own blessed Spirit—communications relative to his own nature and will, the manner in which we may worship him acceptably, the whole duty which he requires of us, the way of return to him through the intervention of a Redeemer, and the certainty of eternal happiness beyond the grave, to all who truly accept and rely on Christ as he is freely offered in the gospel. The world witnesses no combination of folly, ingratitude and impiety, equal to that which is manifested by those who cast from them with contempt the unspeakable gift of God—the volume of his revealed will—Be it yours, my dear youth, to act a wiser and better part. Reverence profoundly, and study diligently and carefully, those “holy scriptures which are able to make you wise unto salvation.”

tion, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” In ordinary circumstances, let no day of your life pass without reading a portion of these Scriptures, attentively and devoutly. Make them, in all cases, the man of your counsel, and endeavour to govern your conduct and your feelings by their sacred dictates.

2. Learn from what you have heard, to accompany the perusal of the scriptures, with earnest prayer for the influences of that Holy Spirit by whom they were indited; that the truths they contain may enter your understandings and your hearts with a saving efficacy. It is the want of this, believe it, which is the reason that some knowledge of the Bible—in many instances a very considerable *intellectual* knowledge—is entirely unproductive of the fruits of holiness—the great end for which God has revealed his will, and to attain which should be our main purpose in becoming familiar with it. Revealed truth, like other truth, may enlarge our intellectual stores, without having much, or any influence, on the moral powers of our minds—on the conscience and the affections. To produce this effect, there must be, if I may so express it, *a second revelation*. The Holy Spirit, agreeably to the distinct intimation of the Saviour himself, the great prophet of his church, must “take of the things which are his, and show them unto us”—must bring home the truths which relate to him, and to our eternal well being, with a light and a transforming energy, which shall render us “new creatures in Christ Jesus.” Pray for this in the devout daily reading of your Bibles; for I verily believe that this practice was never long continued without the most sensible benefit—never persisted in, without being ultimately productive of that faith, the end of which is the salvation of the soul. Amen.

## LECTURE XXII.

*How doth Christ execute the office of a Priest?*

THE subject of the ensuing lecture is the answer to the twenty-fifth question of our catechism, which is thus expressed—

“Christ executeth the office of a Priest, in his once offering up himself a sacrifice, to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God; and in making continual intercession for us.”

My dear youth—No part of theological truth is more closely connected with what is essential to our salvation, than the priestly office of Christ, the subject which is now before us—Give it therefore your most serious attention.

“A priest is a publick person, who, in the name of the guilty, deals with an offended God, for reconciliation by sacrifice, which he offers to God upon an altar, being thereto called of God that he may be accepted—No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that was called of God, as was Aaron.”\* Thus, under the Mosaick dispensation, the high priest, in performing his most sacred duties, was the representative of all the tribes of Israel; and in token of it, he was commanded to bear their names on the shoulders of the ephod, and on the breast-plate of judgment upon his heart, whenever he should go into the holy place, “for a memorial before the Lord continually.”

In all this, the legal high priest was nothing more than a type of Christ, the true high priest of his church, who appears before God in the name of sinners, to make reconciliation for them;—and who, in this transaction, bears as it were, the names of his people on his heart.

You will particularly observe that it is not a mere inference made by me, or by any other fallible man, that the ancient

\* Erskine and Fisher.

priesthood was truly and circumstantially typical of Christ. The infallible words of inspiration, in the plainest manner declare and explain this truth. They show in detail, how those ancient institutions "are a shadow of good things to come, but that the body is of Christ." This is especially and largely done in the epistle to the Hebrews, where the inspired writer shows the superiority of the antitype to the type;—of Christ as a priest, over all who sustained that office in the Mosaick ritual. Now, in relation to this superiority, there are a number of important particulars, which it may be proper cursorily to mention.

1. The superiority of his nature and person. The Jewish priests were but mere men; He was "the true God and eternal life." They were sinful men, and needed to offer "first for themselves, and then for the people;" He had no sins of his own, but was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners."

2. Christ was superior to the ancient priests in the manner of his investiture, or installation. "Those priests were made without an oath; but Christ with an oath, by him that said unto him, The Lord sware, and will not repent, thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedeck. By so much is Jesus made a surety of a better testament." Being thus invested with the priestly office, by the oath of the eternal Father, the most solemn and affecting assurance was given of his being accepted, in whatever he should do in that office for the salvation of his people.

3. The efficacy and perfection of the sacrifice offered by our Redeemer, was infinitely superior to those sacrifices which were but types of his. "It is not possible (says the author of the epistle to the Hebrews) that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins—But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God—By that one sacrifice, he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified."

4. The superiority of the priestly office of Christ, is manifested in its unchangeableness and perpetuity. "They truly

(says the sacred writer last quoted) were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue, by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood—For he testifieth—thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedeck.” Of Melchisedeck you know that it is said, “he had neither beginning of days nor end of life;” the meaning of which is, that no account is given us of his birth and parentage, nor of his death. But he was both a king and a priest; and though there is no reason to doubt that he died like other men, yet as he was an eminent type of Christ in many respects, so there was a peculiar resemblance in this, that he succeeded to no other priest, and no other succeeded to him. Christ has no successor, for “he himself abideth a priest continually—He ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

As these particulars serve to show the superior nature of our Lord’s priestly office, so you will observe that they give us a full scriptural warrant, to consider our Redeemer as executing that office, in all its functions and in all its details. When therefore we do this, we follow no fancy of our own; we adopt no theological or technical fiction, as some would represent it, but deliver sober scriptural doctrine, which we are not only permitted, but required to maintain.

Having made these remarks, I now observe that the priestly office of Christ consisted of two parts—

I. That of expiation:

II. That of intercession.

Both of these are distinctly noticed in the answer before us, and let us consider each attentively.

I. Christ has made expiation for sin. The catechism expresses it thus,—“he *once* offered up himself a sacrifice, to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us unto God.”

According to this statement, the reason why an expiation was necessary lay here,—that divine justice required a satisfaction, before human guilt *could* be remitted—I say before it *could* be remitted; for among all the impossibilities that can be imagined, none is greater than that God should deny

himself; or act contrary to one of his essential attributes, which is the same thing.

We presume not to say indeed, that it was not possible for the Deity to provide for the salvation of man, in any other way than precisely that which he actually chose. We hold it to be presumptuous in worms of the dust, thus to pronounce on the resources and will of the infinite Jehovah. But we do say that justice is an essential attribute of God, and that if this attribute forbade the pardon of human guilt without an atonement or expiation, we cannot otherwise conceive than that the thing was strictly impossible. And I think the scripture doctrine clearly is, that the divine justice did absolutely forbid pardon without an atonement. There have indeed been those who have admitted the atonement of Christ, and yet have chosen to say, that God might have remitted sin without an expiation, and without an impeachment of any attribute of his nature. But would it not then follow that the sufferings and death of Christ were, if not an absolute superfluity, yet something that might have been dispensed with? Now if we consider how awful and extensive those sufferings were; and if especially we take into view the prayer of Christ in his agony, thrice repeated—"Father, *if it be possible*, let this cup pass from me," it seems to me that we are not at liberty to suppose that these sufferings, in the actual circumstances of the case, were avoidable, in consistency with the divine honour. Would the God of mercy have laid all he did on his only begotten and well beloved Son, if it had not been absolutely indispensable? Would not the Saviour's prayer have been answered, had his own condition "*if it be possible*," been admissible? Did not the Father virtually say, in not removing the cup,—"*it is not possible*; the cup cannot be removed, and justice be sustained." Truly it appears so to me.—"*Die he, or justice must.*" Yes—He died to satisfy Divine justice, violated and set at nought by the sin of man. The angels had sinned, and justice drove them quick to hell: and when man sinned, justice would have lost its character—it would have ceased to be

justice—if it had not demanded the same penalty for the second transgression, which had been equitably inflicted for the first. Justice did demand it, and man must have endured the penalty of death—eternal death, the denounced and stipulated penalty of the violated law—if Christ had not undertaken for him, borne the penalty, and satisfied justice fully in his behalf.

Christ being a person of infinite dignity and worth, his awful and inconceivable sufferings, for a short period, made as great a display; nay, I think a much greater and more fearful display of justice, than if the guilty party had been immediately doomed to endless perdition. This, therefore, was the device of God for saving man—This the astonishing undertaking of Christ in our behalf. It was not competent to any created being to conceive such a plan; nor to propose it, if it could have been conceived. It had been infinite presumption in any creature, to propose that the eternal Son of God should take the law place of a guilty worm. But with God it was competent both to conceive and to execute this device; a device in which all the divine attributes are preserved entire, rendered perfectly harmonious, and displayed more illustriously than in all his other works.

The objections which have been raised against the equity of inflicting the penalty due to sin on an innocent Saviour, and against the propriety of his even consenting to suffer in the place of the guilty, have always, I must say, appeared to me perfectly idle. The objections go directly to subvert the doctrine of the atonement altogether. If established, they would leave nothing that could with propriety be called an atonement. Now if no other account could be given of the doctrine of substitution, but that it is plainly revealed in scripture, this would be enough; and we do believe that thus it is revealed, as the plan of infinite wisdom and mercy for our salvation. The ways of God are, in all cases, but imperfectly understood by us; and when we know from his nature, that he can do nothing wrong, it ill becomes us to object against his method of providing for our salvation, be-

cause we cannot perfectly reconcile it to our notions of propriety, or run an exact parallel between it and the transactions which take place among men. I am of the opinion that in this transaction there was, indeed, much which was *sui generis*—of a nature peculiar to itself,—and which cannot have a perfect parallel in human transactions: And I must forever protest against trying a doctrine of pure and plain revelation at the bar of human reason. If God has spoken, let man be silent and adore. His word we know is perfect truth, however his ways may be unsearchable. Whatever is not unsearchable, wants, as we have heretofore observed, one of the usual signatures of the ways of God. And to set up philosophical reasonings, in opposition to any thing appearing and claiming to be from God, is folly in the abstract. The office of reason and philosophy here is, to examine the *evidence*, whether the claim be just. If not, reject it; if it be, and we cannot explain it, we have only to confess our ignorance and weakness. This is reason and true philosophy.

Still I think it not difficult to answer most of the cavils of objectors to the doctrine of substitution; and this too, without going much beyond their own principles—so far I mean as *equity* is concerned. Since they are so zealous for equity, let them tell us where would be the equity of the divine government in permitting Christ to suffer the inconceivable torments he did; torments far, far beyond those of the martyrs, or of any other victim of human malice; for none of them *swet blood*—Where, we ask, was the equity of this, if he had no guilt, either actual or imputed? Actual guilt, they say with us, he had none. Imputed guilt, we say, was the cause of his sufferings. But they affirm there was also none of this; and thus they leave him to suffer, beyond any human being, without guilt, actual or imputed. Is this reconcilable with the justice and equity, to say nothing of the goodness and mercy of God?

Again, much is said against the equity of punishing an innocent person, in place of the guilty. We readily admit, that to take an innocent person by force, and punish him for

the guilty, is gross iniquity. But does this at all apply to the case before us?—The objectors themselves know that it does not. Christ not only consented, but voluntarily *chose*, to make himself a substitute in the case contemplated: and when a great *publick good* is to be produced by offering and accepting such a substitute, there is nothing in justice, or in any proper consideration or motive, to prevent it. Hostages are always given and taken, on this principle. Surety for debt rests precisely on the same ground—Nay, the actions performed on this principle, have been considered as among the most illustrious of all, in moral magnanimity—Such was that, so often alluded to on this subject, of the prince of antiquity, who executed a part of the severity of a law on himself, that he might at once preserve the law inviolable, and yet save in part his offending son: and such is that of all the individuals who have devoted themselves to death for the good of their country.—How infinitely beyond these, was the act of the Saviour, in devoting himself to temporary death, to deliver myriads of immortal beings from eternal death.

Besides, it should be remembered that the Saviour had such a power over his own life, as no mere mortal ever possessed. This power over his human life, he in fact exercised, not only in laying it down, but also in taking it up again. This, you will remember, he explicitly asserts—“No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself—I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” In this respect no man can be a parallel with Christ.

On the whole then, it appears that there was nothing contrary to equity, justice, or reason, in Christ making himself a vicarious offering for sinners, to satisfy divine justice in their behalf.

Consider now, that as the priestly office of Christ excelled that of others who sustained it, in several particulars already noticed, so likewise in this, that he was in himself, priest, sacrifice, and altar, all in one—

1. He acted as priest in offering this sacrifice. The scripture is explicit in stating, that Christ offered up *himself*. As

priest, he presented himself, as the victim for sacrifice. "For if the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit *offered himself* without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God."

2. Christ was the sacrifice, as well as the priest. "He appeared to put away sin by the *sacrifice of himself*—Even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us—Without shedding of blood there is no remission." It was, you will observe, the human nature of Christ alone, which suffered in making this sacrifice. The Deity cannot suffer; and the divine nature in Christ therefore suffered nothing. But it is important to remark, that both parts of his human nature,—his body and his soul, which were ultimately separated from each other,—suffered, and were made a sacrifice, in this great transaction. His body was subjected to great pain and torture. But if this alone had constituted his suffering, he would have borne it, as others have borne it, without a complaint. Indeed we do not read that he ever uttered a single complaint, in regard to all his bodily pains, dreadful as they certainly were. The sufferings of his soul, were those that made him complain—"My soul," he said, "is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Those who, in describing or contemplating the sufferings of Christ, dwell wholly, or chiefly, on what related to his body, disregard the statement of facts as given in the Bible. A felt sense of the desert of sin; the assaults of the powers of darkness on his holy soul; the dereliction of his heavenly Father, and the inflictions of divine wrath; these produced his agony; these his prayer and his complaint; these his exclamation—"My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me." Thus Christ, in his human nature,—in his body and his soul—was made, as it were, a burnt sacrifice for sin.

3. He was the altar, as well as the sacrifice and the priest. His divine nature was the altar which sanctified the gift. It sustained the human nature, which, but for this, would have sunk, long before it did—The divine nature sustained the

human, as the imperishable materials of an altar sustains the fire, till the sacrifice is completed or consumed. And the Saviour died voluntarily at last. He dismissed his own soul from his body. When he had endured all that the law and justice of God required, he said, "It is finished, and gave up the ghost." The divine nature it also was, that gave an infinite dignity and value to this sacrifice of Christ; so as to render it of complete efficacy to make a full atonement for the sins of all his people.

Thus, my dear children, did our adorable Redeemer make an expiation for the sins of men—May it be, that your sins and mine were there atoned for!

In consequence of this expiation, God is perfectly reconcilable to guilty man. All the demands of his justice are completely satisfied—for the sins of every soul that in faith rests for pardon on this great atonement, and on this alone—Here is all our hope. O, let us not cast it from us! Now that "mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other"—now that the way is clearly open for reconciliation with God, shall we neglect to seek reconciliation! Shall we dash the cup of salvation from us! God forbid!

II. The second part of Christ's priestly office is intercession. "He ever liveth," saith an apostle, "to make intercession for us." "We have an advocate with the Father," says another apostle, "Jesus Christ the righteous." As the priests daily, under the Mosaick dispensation, offered sacrifices and prayers for the people, and as the high priest once a year, on the great day of atonement, entered for the same purpose into the holy of holies; so Christ, after offering his one perfect sacrifice for sin, has entered into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God, to plead its efficacy in behalf of all his people; and to present their prayers, perfumed with his merits, to the eternal Father. The Father himself, loves his people, and is infinitely disposed to confer on them every needful good. But man is a sinner, and to approach the God whom his sins have offended through an intercessor, is a con-

stant recognition of a sinful character; and as such, it is an order useful to man, as well as honourable to the majesty of God. It also honours the Son of God, as it shows that all which sinners receive is given on his account; and it likewise endears him highly to all the redeemed. These purposes we can perceive that it serves, and it may answer other ends, at present unknown to us.

Christ is a powerful, prevalent, intercessor—He is never denied. Here on earth he could say to his Father, “I know that thou hearest me always.” Nay, his intercession is to be regarded as the expression of his own will; for not only is he always one in will with the Father, but in virtue of what he has done, he has *a covenant right* to express his will, in regard to his people. Thus in his last intercessory prayer on earth, (the best exemplar of his intercession in heaven) he says—“Father, *I will* that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.” He intercedes for the conversion of his people, while they are yet estranged from God—and is answered. He intercedes for their restoration, when they wander—He intercedes that their faith may not fail, as in the case of Peter, to whom he said—“I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” He intercedes for each of them *personally and individually*; for of “*all* that the Father hath given him will he lose *none*.”

Of the precise mode or manner in which the intercession of Christ in heaven is carried on, we are not informed in the sacred scriptures; and on every topick on which scripture is silent, it is best for us to form no decisive opinion; although we may reverently express what appears to us most probable. We know that our blessed Saviour is glorified in body and in soul, and in this form is set down “on the right hand of the Majesty on high:” And as he used *words* in his intercessory prayer on earth; and employed them after his resurrection, in his conversations with his apostles; and after his ascension, in addressing Paul at his conversion—it has been thought probable by some, that his intercession before the throne on high,

may, on certain occasions at least, be made in words. However this may be—and very eminent men have been divided in opinion on the subject—it is agreed on all hands, that his appearance in heaven, in that body in which he suffered on earth for his people, is virtually a perpetual intercession with the Father, in their behalf. It is expressly declared in scripture, that “Christ is entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:” and the presence there of that glorified body in which remain the prints of the nails and the spear, and of that sacred head which was crowned with thorns, and of those holy lips which expressed his agony in the garden and on the cross—the very presence of these, speaks and pleads beyond all the eloquence of words, whether of men or of angels. An illustration of this from a historical fact is given by Doddridge, in his sermon on the intercession of Christ, in the following passage:

“ Now this appearance of Christ in heaven, which is expressed by his *standing in the midst of the throne, as a lamb that had been slain*, may properly be called a virtual intercession. There is a language in that circumstance, more forcible than in any words that we can imagine. This is happily illustrated by the pious Mr. Flavel, by the story of Amyntas and Æschylus, as Ælian relates it. Æschylus was condemned to death by the Athenians, and was just going to be led to execution. His brother Amyntas had signalized himself in the service of his country; and on the day of a most illustrious victory, in a great measure obtained by his means, had lost his hand. He came into the court just as his brother was condemned, and without saying any thing, drew the stump of his arm from under his garment, and held it up in their sight; and the historian tells us, ‘that when the judges saw this mark of his sufferings, they remembered what he had done, and discharged his brother, though he had forfeited his life.’ Thus does Christ, our dear elder brother, silently, but powerfully, plead for our forfeited lives: And such is the happy consequence. His Father looks on the marks of his sufferings, and remembers what he has done; and

in this sense *His blood is continually speaking better things than the blood of Abel. We have an advocate with the Father, who is also the propitiation for our sins.*"

You may perhaps be ready to think that this illustration is hardly suitable to the subject of Christ's intercession; and truly there is no transaction among men that can pretend to compare with it, either in dignity or interest. But the inspired penmen themselves, do not hesitate to illustrate heavenly things by those which are earthly. And the condescension of God, in thus accommodating himself to our capacities and apprehensions, only makes a more powerful demand on our admiration and love. No thought can be more interesting and delightful to an humble and self emptied sinner, than that he has in heaven a friend, an advocate, an intercessor, who is "touched with the feeling of his infirmities;" who knows, better than he knows himself, all his desires and perplexities; and who will make effectual prayer of every petition that he offers, before the throne of God on high.

From a consideration of the priestly office of Christ, let me exhort you—1. To reflect seriously on the evil of sin. Who can estimate the intrinsick malignity and ill desert of that evil, for which divine justice could not be satisfied, but by an expiation which required, in order to its being made, the inconceivable sufferings and ignominious death of the Son of God himself? And O my young friends! if "these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry!" If the immaculate Saviour suffered as he did, only when standing in place of the guilty, how will the soul of the sinner himself suffer, when divine justice shall exact from him its full demand, for all his personal transgressions! And this exaction will surely be made, of every sinner who dies without a personal interest in that great atonement which Christ Jesus has made—made for the benefit of those—and those only—who by faith are united to him, before the day of grace is forever closed by death. You are by nature and by practice sinners; and from each of you personally, this exaction will be made, if not prevented by a flight to Christ, and a re-

liance on his merits alone for pardon and salvation. Fidelity to your souls and my own, requires that I plainly warn, as now I do, those of you who have not yet embraced the Saviour, that the accumulated guilt of all their transgressions rests upon them; and that if not speedily removed by the atoning blood of Christ, it will press them down to a perdition hopeless and eternal. Therefore

2. Be urged to make no delay in availing yourselves of that merciful provision, which a gracious God has made for your deliverance from all the consequences of sin; and to raise you to all the happiness and the glory, which the once suffering but now exalted Redeemer will bestow, on all those whom he has bought with his precious blood. The priestly office of Christ is full of terror, as you have seen, on the one hand; but it is equally full of persuasion and encouragement, on the other. By that one offering which the Lord Jesus has made of himself, he has opened the way for the very chief of sinners to return to God, with an assurance that, for the sake of the atoning and interceding Saviour, all their offences shall be freely cancelled; and all the blessings and benefits of his purchase be made over to them. What an encouragement is here to press into the kingdom of God! For the guilty and condemned, an all-sufficient surety is provided, who invites, and urges, and commands them to come to him, and receive, as his free gift, pardon, salvation and eternal life. He stands before the throne of the Sovereign of heaven and earth, whose justice he has fully satisfied, to plead his own merits, in behalf of every penitent and returning sinner. His intercession makes effectual prayer of every petition which they believingly offer in his name. O confess your sins, with a sincere and contrite heart!—Take to yourselves the charge of guilt with all its aggravations, and without attempting palliation. You are completely guilty, and entirely undone in yourselves. But there is a complete salvation provided for you in Christ. Renounce your own righteousness with abhorrence, and with gratitude unspeakable, accept of his. Send up your cries through his prevalent intercession, for the Holy Spirit, to

renew you in the temper of your minds; to work in your hearts that faith which shall form an indissoluble bond of union between him and your souls; and ensure to you ere long, an admission to his blissful presence in the mansions of eternal purity and peace. *Amen.*

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## LECTURE XXIII.

*How doth Christ execute the office of a King?*

“CHRIST executeth the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.”

I have heretofore had occasion to show, that the kingly office of Christ is plainly taught in the holy scripture. To this office he was ordained, or appointed, even from everlasting. It is the general opinion of orthodox divines, that to him the personification of wisdom refers, which we find in the 8th chapter of the book of Proverbs; where it is said—“I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.” It is clearly the doctrine of scripture, that the universe was created by Christ, and for him; and that he is made “head over all things to the church.” “By him (says the apostle) were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist: And he is the head of the body the church.”

Thus it appears that Christ Jesus is the sovereign Lord of creation, and exercises his dominion with a special reference to his church and people. From the nature of the case, he could not exercise his kingly office as a part of his mediatorial character and work, till after the fall of our first parents. Till there were sinners and rebels against God, there was no

room for the functions of a Mediator. But immediately after the fall, the kingly office of Christ, as mediator between God and man, began to be exercised. The promise was then made, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head—a promise to be fulfilled in the exercise of divine and sovereign power, which was to be manifested by Christ, as the king of his church.

The throne of this mighty potentate,—this King of Zion,—is in heaven. The Lamb that “is in *the midst* of the throne, (says St. John speaking of heaven) shall feed his people, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.” This is now a throne of grace to his people, to which they are invited to approach with a holy boldness, “that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” This throne, at the consummation of all things, shall be placed in the visible aerial heavens;—it shall be set as a throne of judgment for angels and men, and they shall stand before it, to receive from Christ the award of life or death eternal.

Even now, the king of Zion sways his sceptre with resistless efficacy, both over his friends and foes. The gospel is the *sceptre of his grace*, which, accompanied by the power of his Spirit, is made effectual, first to gather, and afterwards to guide and govern, his own people. The power of his anger is that *iron sceptre* whereby he dashes his enemies in pieces, and destroys all those who inflexibly refuse his grace. He is called in scripture the “Lord of hosts,” and all the armies in heaven, whether saints or angels, obey his commands. Nay, Satan and all his host, are not only perfectly under his control, but are the executioners of his wrath on the wicked of this world, who will not have him to reign over them. Satan is permitted (and he only waits for the permission) to inflict on them the judgments which their crimes invoke. At the bidding of the King of Zion, too, the elements of nature, or the meanest of the animal or reptile tribes, become the scourges of mankind.

Christ also receives a continual tribute of voluntary praise,

honour and glory, from the saints on earth, and from both saints and angels in heaven: And he levies a tribute of unwilling praise, even on his enemies: He maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of that wrath he restrains.

The King of Zion has sometimes made his angels his ambassadors. "They delight to do his will—They are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation." How much we owe to their invisible agency, we cannot tell. Both under the old and the new dispensation, they went on many errands of importance, in the administration of the kingdoms of providence and grace: And as they are represented as conveying the departed spirit of Lazarus to Abraham's bosom, it is reasonable to believe that they act as a guard and convoy to heaven, of other departed spirits of the just.

Angels, nevertheless, are not the ordinary ambassadors of Christ, in his kingdom of grace in our world. Not only would their appearance be terrifying, but not sharing in the feelings and infirmities of human nature, they would not know the wants of man by experience, nor sympathise with him in his afflictions, like one of his own kind. In addition to this, the thought is suggested by inspiration, that the praise will more manifestly be all given to God, when his ambassadors are weak and imperfect men themselves, like those to whom they are sent. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." For these reasons, when the King of Zion ascended on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men, "he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ—Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God"—I must here magnify my office. I should fail in my duty to you, my children, if I did not teach you to regard every faithful and consistent

minister of the gospel, in the performance of his official duties, as an ambassador of the King of Zion. Such he unquestionably is; and you are bound to regard his messages and warnings, as those of the Saviour in whose name he speaks.

Having now disposed of some detached, but important circumstances and considerations, relative to the kingly office of Christ, let us briefly consider the several clauses of the answer before us, distinctly and in order.

1. Christ, as a king, subdues his people to himself. He finds them, like the rest of the world, lying in wickedness, the captives of Satan and the slaves of sin,—in bondage to both. He delivers them by the instrumentality of his word, applied by the power of his Spirit—The word of God is the sword of the Spirit. The Spirit of Christ, therefore, is the agent, and divine truth the instrument, in the conversion of sinners. No other instrument is *immediately* used, but divine truth; and no agent can render that truth savingly efficacious, but the Holy Spirit. Hence those two remarkable passages of scripture, relative to the regeneration or conversion of the saints—“Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible; *by the word of God*, which liveth and abideth forever—which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, *but of God*.” In the first of these passages, you observe that *the word of God* is the seed, or *instrumental cause* of regeneration; in the second, after setting aside all human agency, *God himself* is represented as *the efficient cause*, or agent in this great work. The Spirit of Christ then—of Christ as the great king and head of his church—using the word of God, as the sword in his hand, subdues his people to himself. They are made “a willing people in the day of his power.”

The will is principally concerned in this work—The people of Christ are not treated as machines: They are not *driven* into his kingdom. They are rendered *willing*; and they never act more willingly, nor with greater freedom, than when they become his subjects. He sweetly bows their

wills, and draws their affections from obedience and attachment to sin and Satan, to supreme love to himself, and a prevalent regard to all his requisitions. Thus they are changed, and the bias and current of their souls is altered—from rebellion to obedience; from sin to holiness. They now are *subdued* to Christ, by the soft, but resistless energy of his grace. They “are translated out of the kingdom of Satan, into the kingdom of God’s dear Son:” And although they remain still in the world, yet they are not *of* the world, but true and lively members of Christ’s invisible kingdom; and therefore the subjects of hatred with the devoted friends of the world, because different from them in temper and pursuit.

Every subject of Christ’s kingdom, puts forth the acts of a justifying saving faith, as one of the first fruits and exercises of that grace which his Spirit implants. Action presupposes an agent:—Saving faith is the act or exercise of a new nature, which must therefore exist before faith can be exercised. Yet as this nature acts as soon as it exists, and acts in the exercise of faith, we are no more obliged to separate regeneration from faith, than to separate any other cause from its necessary and invariable effect—where you find the one, you will certainly find the other. In the present case, it is that faith which flows from a renewed heart which embraces the offered Saviour, and insures to its possessor all the benefits of his purchase. By faith, wrought in the heart and drawn into exercise by the Spirit of Christ, he applies to the soul of each of his subjects the whole of his satisfaction and benefits. In virtue of this application, all demands of law and justice are answered fully;—the happy subject of it receives the complete pardon of sin; the spirit of adoption, whereby the law of God is obeyed from a principle of love; victory over the world; and eventually over the last enemy, death.

2. The answer before us states that when Christ, as a king, has subdued his people to himself, he afterwards “rules and defends them.”

Christ's kingdom is not of this world. The subjects of it are not absolved from their obedience to earthly magistrates, but enjoined to render it as a part of Christian duty—There is but one exception to this, and that is, when the civil ruler requires that which is directly contrary to the laws of Christ; in which case we must obey God rather than man, though life itself be the forfeiture. On this principle, all the real martyrs of the Christian faith have suffered death.

Christ as a king, rules his people by his laws; by which we are to understand his moral laws, a summary of which we have in the decalogue, or ten commandments. In keeping of these commandments, his people have a great reward, even at present. Christ writes these laws in their hearts, and puts them (as the scripture expresses it) "in their inward parts." They really love these laws; and obedience to them is not only sweet and delightful in itself, but it also secures the testimony of a good conscience toward God: For Christ has satisfied the moral law for his people, as a covenant of works; and he gives it out to them only as a rule of life; by which when they conscientiously walk, they have confidence toward God, notwithstanding the imperfection which cleaves to all they do.

Christ rules *in* the hearts of his people, by conquering their corruptions for them, and by the grace of his Holy Spirit, sweetly conforming their wills to his own blessed will; and by invigorating, sustaining and quickening all their graces.

Christ as a king, gives laws to his church as a community —of which all his people are members. No man, or body of men, has any authority to enact a single law, rite or ceremony, for the church of Christ. He is himself the only law-giver, and men are only the executors of his laws. But when the laws of Christ for his church are faithfully executed, in the due administration of discipline—however a profane and ungodly generation may scorn or deride it—they are infinitely more dreadful than any civil penalties. What his officers thus bind in his name on earth, he binds in heaven.

Christ as a king directs and corrects his people, by his pro-

vidential dispensations. Their whole lot in life, whether in wealth or poverty, in prosperity or adversity, in honour or dis-honour, in joy or in sorrow, is ordered by him. He marks all their path, and directs all that befals them; and he will assured-ly make all things work together for their good. He chastens or corrects them in covenant faithfulness. When they wan-der from him, or are disobedient to him, his chastising rod is laid upon them, to restore them to duty and to comfort. Even for the improvement of their graces, and their general sanctification and progress in the divine life, chastisement is frequently the mean employed. “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” But while the Lord corrects, he upholds his people, and often renders the seasons of their affliction, the times of the sweetest spiritual consolation to their souls.

Christ as a king defends his people. They are ever their own most dangerous enemies. Soon would they become the prey of their own mistakes, perverseness and corruption, if he, by his providence and grace, did not defend them. But by his providence he crosses those designs that would injure or ruin them, if they were not disappointed and defeated. By his grace, he keeps “alive within them the spark of holy fire, in the midst of an ocean of corruption;” nay, he in-creases and kindles it, till it dries up, or consumes, all that opposes it. Christ also defends his people against ungodly men, and the powers of darkness. This introduces the

3d and last clause of the answer before us—“He restrains and conquers, all his and their enemies.” Christ has identi-fied himself with his people: They compose but one body, of which he is the head, and they are the members; and therefore they have of course the same friends and the same foes. This affords to his subjects the most consolatory assur-ance of perfect protection: For their Redeemer and Sov-reign is the mighty God of Jacob, and while he reigns they must be safe—“If God be for us, who can be against us!”

Because the people of Christ “are not of the world, there-

fore the world hateth them." Persecution, in one form or another, every truly loyal subject of the king of Zion will receive from ungodly men. But their Sovereign holds these men perfectly in his hand, and restrains, and bounds, and defeats their rage, at his pleasure. Their power, their swords, their tongues, their efforts, are all subject to his control. He will not permit them to do his people any real injury. They shall live while Christ has work for them to do; they shall suffer no more than he pleases to permit; all that they do suffer shall moreover but brighten their eternal crown; and death itself shall but bring them to his immediate and blissful presence. Over death he has himself triumphed, and this last enemy he enables them also to vanquish. Often they expire with the conqueror's song—"O death where is thy sting! O grave where is thy victory! Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Christ as king, especially restrains and bounds the malice of Satan, and all the infernal powers. But for this restraint they would speedily destroy his subjects; for his subjects are, in themselves weak, and their enemies are strong. The adversary of souls had power and subtilty sufficient to destroy sinless man in paradise. But man then stood in his own strength. Now every Christian, even the weakest, is under the protection of the Lord Jesus; and therefore, with all his imperfections, he is safe. Christ will keep him. The adversary cannot go beyond his chain—He may tempt but he cannot compel. He may threaten but he cannot injure. He may terrify, but he cannot destroy. He is a conquered enemy, and every saint shall triumph over him.

But it is pleasing to think of the conquests which the king of Zion is yet to make, by the influence of his Spirit and grace, in our guilty world. The empire of Satan, since the fall of man, has been extensive indeed, and so it continues still. But the period is advancing—perhaps it is not far distant—when Satan is to be bound, and to deceive the nations no more for a thousand years. Then shall the king of Zion

extend his peaceful and heavenly reign throughout the earth. Nations shall be born in a day—The world shall own its Lord and Saviour, from the rising to the setting sun—

“ Swift fly the years; and rise the expected morn!  
Oh spring to light, auspicious day, be born!

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Rise, crown'd with light, imperial Salem, rise!  
Exalt thy towery head, and lift thy eyes!  
See a long race thy spacious courts adorn;  
See future sons, and daughters yet unborn,  
In crowding ranks on every side arise,  
Demanding life, impatient for the skies!  
See barbarous nations at thy gates attend,  
Walk in thy light, and in thy temple bend;  
See thy bright altars throng'd with prostrate kings,  
And heap'd with products of Sabœan springs!  
For thee Idume's spicy forests blow,  
And seeds of gold in Ophir's mountains glow.  
See heaven its sparkling portals wide display,  
And break upon thee in a flood of day!  
No more the rising sun shall gild the morn,  
Nor evening Cynthia fill her silver horn;  
But lost, dissolved in thy superior rays,  
One tide of glory, one unclouded blaze  
O'erflow thy courts: the Light himself shall shine  
Reveal'd, and God's eternal day be thine!  
The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay,  
Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away;  
But fix'd his word, his saving power remains;  
Thy realm for ever lasts, thy own MESSIAH reigns!”

My dear children—Make this king of Zion your friend, by sweetly submitting to the sceptre of his grace. Then shall you not only behold, but be partakers of all his glory. Amen.

## LECTURE XXIV.

*Wherein did Christ's humiliation consist?*

"CHRIST's humiliation consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time."

Christ's humiliation, in general, consisted in his descending to have that glory which he had with the Father before the world was, veiled for a time; by his coming into this lower world "in the likeness of sinful flesh," to be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." You will be careful to observe, that this humiliation was, in the highest degree voluntary, on the part of Christ—He yielded to it by no constraint. It had no other source but his own, and the eternal Father's self-moved undeserved LOVE, to lost mankind.

Let us now consider the several steps of Christ's humiliation, as they are mentioned in the answer. "He was born, and that in a low condition." It had been an unparalleled condescension in Christ, to assume our nature in any imaginable circumstances. How astonishing the stoop for him who was the eternal Son of God, happy in the bosom of the Father, the Creator and the Lord of all the angelick host, and receiving their profoundest homage—to become the Son of man, and be made, as to his human nature, of a woman! Had he made his entrance into our world with all the state, and pomp, and splendour of royalty, that condescension had still been ineffable. But how are we to conceive of it, when, in place of external grandeur and respect, we consider the low condition in which he was actually born! His mother,

and his reputed father were both, it is true, of the most honourable descent—They traced their lineage to David and to Abraham; and the genealogy of Christ, according to the flesh, is particularly recorded in the New Testament, to show that the promises of God to those ancient saints, that the Messiah should proceed from them, had been strictly and remarkably fulfilled. But at the time of our Redeemer's birth, his mother, although of royal ancestry, was reduced to such a state of obscurity and poverty, that in nature's most trying hour, she could procure no admission to an inn. With the cattle of the stall she was obliged to seek a refuge. The Son of God was born in a stable, and laid in a manger—There it was that he who made the worlds, became an infant of days!—That he whose arm upholds the universe, was wrapped in swaddling bands! This was humiliation indeed. While this is recollected, never let a poor disciple of Jesus either blush or complain. Thus low did the Redeemer stoop, to lift up sinners out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, into which their sins had plunged them. How can we proceed, without stopping, for a moment, to admire “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes, became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich”—that we by faith might claim a relation to him as our kinsman Redeemer, and say, “unto *us* a child is born, unto *us* a Son is given—he is *our* Immanuel, God WITH US!”

Our Redeemer, it appears, was subject to his parents according to the flesh, during the whole period of his minority. He was bred to a laborious occupation. He was called the carpenter, and the carpenter's son. Let honest industry never be ashamed of its toils, for it is employed only as the Redeemer of the world has set the example.

But the answer states that another part of our Lord's humiliation was, that “he was made under the law.” The law, here principally referred to, was certainly the moral law. Christ indeed yielded obedience to all the divine institutions, ceremonial and political, as well as moral; because the former

of these, while they lasted, had the same author as the latter, and were therefore equally obligatory; and he declared to his forerunner that it became him to fulfil all righteousness. But the ceremonial and political institutions of the Jews were temporary; the moral law, on the contrary, is of eternal and unceasing obligation. It was to this that he was made subject, as our *surety*. This was the law given to Adam at his creation; and was that on which the covenant of works was founded, when he dwelt in paradise. By the breach of this law, as a covenant, all mankind were brought under the curse. When therefore it is said by the apostle (Gal. iv. 4, 5,) "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law," we must not only understand the *moral law* to be chiefly spoken of, but spoken of specially as a covenant of works. We have just seen that the object of Christ's coming was to redeem them that were under the law;—that is, to answer its demands in their place. He did answer its demands in their place, and thus the second Adam repaired the ruins of the first. The law has no longer any claims upon his believing people, in the form of a covenant. But he never fulfilled it for them as a rule of life, in any other way than as giving them a perfect example of obedience to it. If he had, then Christians would be under no obligation to render a personal obedience to the moral law. This indeed the gross Antinomians have in terms affirmed. But it is only a monstrous and impious inference of their own, made in direct contradiction of the words of Christ himself—"I came not," said he, "to destroy the law, but to fulfil it." That it was the moral law of which our Saviour here spoke is evident; because he did actually destroy or put an end to the ceremonial and political laws of the Jews—so far as they were separable, as in most cases they were, from the principles of the moral law.

It is justly represented as a striking part of Christ's humiliation, that he was made under the law; because it was a most amazing condescension, that the great Lord and law-

giver of heaven and earth, should become subject to the law which he had enacted for humble and inferior creatures;—especially when he did it to fulfil that law in the place of those very creatures, after they had transgressed it and incurred its penalty. If you will meditate seriously on this fact, you will find it calculated to fill you with astonishment. It may also show you the miserable state of sinners who have not, by faith, committed their souls to Christ; inasmuch as they have to answer to God, in their own persons, for their whole debt to the law, which they have not obeyed, and the full penalty of which they have incurred. And in contrast with this, it shows the unspeakable happiness of true believers in Christ, whose whole debt is cancelled, by his being made under the law in their room and behalf.

Another item of our Lord's humiliation mentioned in the answer before us, is his "undergoing the miseries of this life." When our blessed Redeemer assumed our nature, he took no exemption from any of its sinless infirmities, but a large share of them all. It is recorded of him that he was weary, that he hungered, that he wept, that he sighed, that he was sorrowful; but never that he smiled, and but once that he rejoiced. He was, as characteristick of him, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." It was prophesied of him, that his "visage should be marred more than any man's." Probably this took place, in a considerable degree, even before his agony. When the Jews said to him, "thou art not yet fifty years old,"—the expression seems to denote clearly, that they took him to be farther advanced in years than he was; for he was then but little more than thirty—And it has been well remarked, that the cares and griefs which he bore, probably gave him the appearance of an age which he had not reached. In short, he endured, as already said, hunger, and thirst, and weariness, and sorrow, and grief; he also submitted to poverty and want, and had not where to lay his head; he yielded to the contradiction, reproach and persecution of an ungrateful and wicked world; and he even humbled himself so far as to endure the assaults and temptations of the

devil. He did all this, that he might extract the sting from the afflictions of his people, and know, even by experience, how to sympathize with them. “We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

But the sufferings we have hitherto mentioned, though not small in themselves, were the least of the miseries which our Redeemer endured, in his state of humiliation on earth—The answer we consider states, that he also underwent “the wrath of God.” By this we are to understand that he endured the awful expression of God’s holy and righteous displeasure against sin. His human nature, as we have heretofore seen, could not have sustained this, but for its union with the divine, which upheld it.

But my children, when you hear of Christ undergoing the wrath of God, you are by no means to suppose that there was ever a moment of time, in which Christ ceased to be the object of his Father’s infinite love. Never was he more the object of that love and complacency, than in the midst of those bitter sufferings which arose from the wrath of God due to our sins. Those sins which he was bearing were the object of the Father’s infinite hatred; but the glorious person bearing them, was then, as at all other times, his well beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. That God should thus please to bruise his Son and put him to grief, and that the Saviour should cheerfully consent to sustain it, is just that view of the infinite love and compassion of God and Christ to mankind sinners, which astonishes, and overwhelms, and melts the soul of a believer, whenever he gets a glimpse of it,—for more than this, he cannot have at present—It is emphatically “a love which passeth knowledge.”

The wrath of God endured by our blessed Lord, when he was acting as a surety for his people, chiefly appeared in his agony in the garden, when he said “My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death; and when he sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground;” and again on the cross, when he cried with a loud voice, “My God,

my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Ah, my dear youth! "if these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"—If Christ suffered thus when he bore the sins of others, how will sinners themselves suffer, when the wrath of God shall be let loose upon them, for their own deserts! How earnest should you be to escape this, by immediately flying to the Saviour, that your sins may be forgiven for his sake—that they may all be blotted out in his precious atoning blood.

Again—The answer before us further states that Christ humbled himself by enduring "the cursed death of the cross." This was a punishment inflicted only on malefactors of the most atrocious and degraded kind—O who can conceive of the humiliation of the Son of God, in consenting to die like slaves and thieves!—a death in which infamy and agony were united, and carried to their very extremity!

The death of the cross was called *a cursed death*, because they who endured it were separated from all good, and devoted to all evil. Christ, although sinless in himself, was separated from all happiness, and devoted to all misery, while he suffered on the accursed tree. God spared him not, but gave him up to this awful death for us all. Hear the words of inspiration, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written—'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.'" Our blessed Redeemer had taken the law place of sinners, and in regard to these it was enacted—"Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."

It is, I presume, known to you all, that the cross was formed by a post sunk in the ground—toward the top of which a transverse piece of wood was firmly fastened: on this the victim had his arms extended, and nails were driven through the palms of each hand to fasten them above, while, in the same manner, the feet were nailed to the post below. In this manner hung, and bled, and died, that Saviour, my dear youth, who thus suffered, for your sins and mine! Having, in these circumstances, been pierced to the heart with a spear,

to insure his death, he said—"It is finished,"—the great work is all accomplished—"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:" And "he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."—The sun hid his face; the earth quaked; the rocks rent; the dead awoke—the death of its Maker darkened and convulsed the universe!

The crucifixion of the Redeemer had been typified, at a very early period of the ancient Jewish church, by the brazen serpent; which Moses, by Divine command, erected on a pole in the wilderness, and to which those who had been stung by serpents, were directed to look for healing: And although the ancient saints had not those clear and definite ideas of the atoning death of Christ which we are favoured with, yet from symbols and sacrifices they knew enough to make this the object and reliance of their faith, and they were saved by it.

I must not leave this part of the subject, till I have distinctly reminded you, that neither during the sufferings, nor at the death of Christ, was his human nature separated from his divine, as some have strangely affirmed. The natures were inseparable; though it was only in his humanity that the Saviour did or could suffer. Yet as the Divine nature gave worth and efficacy to all, if it had been separated from the human soul, there would have been nothing left but the sufferings of a perfect man; of no avail to take away sin, and exhibiting but a low example, comparatively, of humiliation.

Finally—The answer states that Christ was "buried and continued under the power of death for a time." Temporal death had been a part of the penalty threatened to the transgression of the first covenant, and therefore the Surety humbled himself to taste it. In that remarkable prophecy of our Saviour which we have in the 53d chapter of Isaiah, and which seems more like a history than a prophecy, there is one passage which but for the facts, would appear extremely obscure and almost contradictory. It is said "he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." Or as Lowth more accurately renders it—"His grave was ap-

pointed with the wicked; but with the rich man was his tomb.” How wonderfully and exactly was this prophecy accomplished!—As our Lord suffered with thieves, so no doubt, his grave was intended and appointed by the Jews to be with theirs. Yet the purpose of God must stand—“With the rich man was his tomb.” We have only to collect and read the several accounts of the evangelists, thus connected and translated by Lowth—“There was a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, a member of the Sanhedrim, and of a respectable character, who had not consented to their counsel and act: He went boldly to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus; and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out of the rock, near to the place where Jesus was crucified; having first wound it in fine linen, with spices, as the manner of the Jews was to bury the rich and great.” Thus literally, strictly, and strikingly, was this obscure prophecy fulfilled: The grave of Jesus was appointed with the wicked—with thieves and robbers—yet after all, with the rich man was his tomb. How wonderful is it that such prophecies do not convince the Jews!—They will, when the veil shall be taken from their hearts; and I think these striking predictions were partly intended for this very purpose.

Our Lord’s body was laid in a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid before; that when he should arise from the dead, there might be no room to affirm that it was some other possessor of the tomb that had risen, or been removed.

The body of our Lord saw no corruption. It had never been tainted by a single sin. He was in all respects, “God’s holy One;” and therefore when he yielded to the stroke of death and was laid in the tomb, he saw no corruption. He remained a part of three days under the power of death; that is, from about three o’clock of the afternoon of Friday, till after daybreak, on the Lord’s day. This was a space sufficient to number him distinctly with those who are laid in the grave, and to ascertain beyond all controversy that he had been dead—that his body was deprived of every vital principle or indication.

You learn in what is called the apostles' creed that Christ "descended into hell." The word here translated *hell*, is *hades* in Greek. It means only *the state of the dead*—There is no reason to believe that Christ descended to the place of the damned. The awful agony of the garden, the death of the cross, and being numbered with the dead, fully satisfy this expression of the apostles' creed, and we believe that nothing further was intended by it. He said to the penitent malefactor—"This day thou shalt be with me in paradise"—His holy soul was in paradise, while his body lay in the tomb.

Thus have we considered the interesting subject of our Lord's humiliation. I could not forbear a number of reflections as I passed along. Let me entreat you, in addition, to consider—

1. That the humiliation of Christ ought effectually to teach humility, to all who profess to be his disciples. Why was it necessary that the Son of God should stoop so low? Was it not because our sins had cast us from the standing which man originally held, and had sunk us deep in guilt, and infamy, and wretchedness? Was it not because it was indispensable that he should come down to the depths of our degradation, that he might raise us up from them? And is this deeply degraded state, that into which every child of Adam is born?—Is it that in which every one remains, till he is delivered from it, through the influence and application of the stupendous work which was accomplished by the humiliation of Christ? You know, my dear youth, the answers to which these interrogatories point you. Believe it, the humiliation of Christ, when rightly considered, will connect itself with such views of human guilt and debasement, as are fitted to hide pride forever from the eyes of every human being;—fitted to make him feel that before his God he is a polluted, abject wretch, who is ever out of his place, when he is out of the valley of humiliation. It was indeed an infinite condescension for our blessed Redeemer to be in a state of humiliation; but to be in that state is no condescension in us. It is our only proper

state. To claim to be in any other, is infinitely absurd, as well as sinful. O be sensible, that the very essence of sin is pride! It was the first sin, and it has been the mother sin, ever since the first. Let us acknowledge, as becomes us, that we are *guilty and vile*. Let us, as sinners, take our place in the dust before our God. When there, we shall be prepared to receive the benefit of our Lord's humiliation. We shall be willing to owe our salvation entirely to what he has done and suffered on earth, and is now doing in heaven. We shall embrace him—most cordially and thankfully embrace him—as all our salvation and all our desire. We shall prove our discipleship by that lowliness of mind, and by all those acts of condescension and kindness to our fellow sinners, of which he has set us an unspeakably amiable example: and we shall find this lowliness of mind as favourable to our peace and comfort, as it is correspondent to the demands of duty—Yea, we shall find it favourable to true magnanimity, and genuine dignity of character. It marks the ingenuous return of a convinced and humble prodigal, to the love and kind reception of the best of fathers. It is lovely in the sight both of God and man; and it prepares all in whom it is found, to be raised in due time, through the boundings of the Saviour's purchase, to a crown and a kingdom, unfading and eternal.

2. A due consideration of the humiliation of Christ, will most effectually teach us to be patient under sufferings. Was he patient and resigned, and perfectly submissive to his Father's will, when he suffered for our sins? and shall we be impatient and rebellious while we suffer for our own sins? For let it ever be remembered, that if we had not been sinners, suffering had never been known, either by our Saviour or by ourselves. Sin is the cause of all the suffering in the universe. The sin of man has produced whatever of pain and misery has been felt by our guilty race, and by our glorious Redeemer. He endured the awful penalty due to the guilty, without a regret or a murmur, when he stood in their place: and shall any sinner, on this side the place of torment murmur, when he endures only a very small part of what

his iniquities have deserved? With what pertinence and force is it asked in Holy Scripture—"Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?"

By what Christ endured in his humiliation, the sufferings of his own people have changed their character—Their sting is extracted. They are no longer the wrathful inflictions of an incensed judge, but the wholesome, however painful discipline, of a wise, a kind, and a loving Father. Have the people of God this assurance, and can they think of what it cost their Saviour to give them this assurance, and yet can they complain? No—in the lively exercise of faith they cannot; they do not. A delicate woman, under one of the most painful operations of surgery which human nature can sustain, was observed to pass through the whole without a sigh or a groan—How could you bear it thus? was the earnest inquiry, after the operation was safely over. I thought, said she, how much more than I endured, my Saviour bore for me, and I could not find it in my heart to utter a complaint. Here, my dear children, is the blessed secret of bearing pain and affliction of every kind, of which the ungodly world is entirely ignorant. The true believer thinks much of what his Saviour bore; thinks that it was borne for him; thinks that his own sufferings are light in the comparison; thinks that they are all inflicted by a Father's hand; thinks that they are all needed, and that infinitely more are deserved; thinks that they give him the opportunity to exercise precious graces, that shall have an abundant reward; thinks that they will all increase the bliss of heaven; thinks, in a word, that "our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

3. In the humiliation of Christ, we see more strikingly and impressively than any where else, the evil of sin. We see this evil, as already observed, in all the sufferings which mankind endure—in all the painful diseases to which our

race is subject; in all that man inflicts on his fellow man; in all the calamities which arise from war, and famine, and pestilence, and inundation, and earthquake; in all the mortality which has long since made the number of the dead, a thousand fold greater than the number of the living—In all this, you see the consequences and the evil of sin; and truly it is an appalling view. But if you look into the invisible world, and contemplate the state of those who have gone to the place of endless perdition; to the abodes of hopeless despair; to the inconceivable agony described in Holy Writ, by the worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched—by the blackness of darkness forever; by the weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, of those the smoke of whose torment ascendeth up forever and ever—When you contemplate this, you think nothing of all the sufferings of the present life. Here you are ready to say—here, in “the damnation of hell,” we see, in the most awful manner the evil of sin—No, my dear children, there is one other view, that is more awful still. In all you have yet seen, not an individual being endures any thing beyond what he has personally and justly deserved. But now turn your eyes to Gethsemane and Calvary, and there see “the Holy One of God,” suffering by *imputation* only, for the sins of his people—suffering agonies beyond all your conceptions—and then tell, or conceive, if you can, what must be the malignity of that evil, which a righteous God could not consistently pardon, without these ineffable inflictions on his only begotten and well beloved Son. O flee to him!—that as your sins have caused his sufferings, so his meritorious righteousness, wrought out in pain and humiliation, may save you from suffering without hope and without end. This leads me to remark—

4. That we may learn our infinite indebtedness to the Saviour, by contemplating his humiliation. We are accustomed to estimate our obligations to a benefactor, by considering both the intrinsick value of his gift, and what it cost him to bestow it on us. Estimate in this way, if it be possible, the obligations we are under to our adored Redeemer. Can man or

angel tell, what is the value of the gift of eternal life, to those who were doomed to eternal death? But such is the gift of Christ to every glorified spirit, that shall be found in “the General Assembly and Church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven.” Every individual of that whole assembly owes, and will eternally and entirely owe it to Christ, that *his* are all the unknown joys of heaven, in place of all the unknown miseries of hell. And to procure for his people this happy exchange of destiny—to make them the gift of eternal life, their Saviour, in his humiliation, answered a debt which none but a God could pay. “We were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without a spot—Feed the church of God—said the holy apostle—which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Now, when we thus consider what an infinite benefit our blessed Lord bestows on his people, and at what an expense he procured it, do you not perceive that their indebtedness to him is strictly *inconceivable*, is literally *infinite*. He knows that we can never repay him, and he does not require it—Nay, he not only intended that what he did should be gratuitous, but he demands that we receive it as such. It is the height of arrogant and impious self-sufficiency, so much as to think of rendering to Christ an equivalent for what he has done for us, or to think of adding to it by any deeds of our own. We are to receive his gifts “without money and without price.” But he does expect and demand our gratitude—He expects and demands it, as the evidence of our sense of obligation. And where is the gratitude of that human being, who hears the gospel message, and does not feel that he is indebted to the Saviour, beyond what can be uttered or imagined!

Consider then, I entreat you, in what manner you are to make known that you feel your indebtedness to your Redeemer. It is by accepting him as your only Saviour; it is by making nothing of yourselves, and every thing of him; it is by coming to him to deliver you at once from the guilt, the pollution, and the dominion of your sins; it is by devoting

yourselves unreservedly to his service and glory; it is by obeying all his commandments; it is by cultivating a temper and spirit like his own, and walking as you have him for an example; it is by adorning his religion, and using all your means and influence to gain others to embrace it; it is by living as citizens of heaven—holding communion with your Redeemer now, and anticipating the happy period when you shall see him as he is, be in your measure like him, and dwell for ever in his presence, in the mansions which he has gone to prepare for his people. Amen.

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## LECTURE XXV.

*Wherein consists Christ's exaltation?*

WE are now to enter on the important subject of Christ's exaltation—It is thus stated in the catechism. “Christ's exaltation consisteth in his rising again from the dead on the third day, in his ascending up into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day.”

When we speak of the exaltation of Christ, you are not to understand by it that any new glory was conferred on his divine nature—that was impossible; for as God, his glory was infinite and unchangeable. But this glory, as we have seen, was eclipsed and hidden, while he assumed our nature, and appeared in our world in the form of a servant. His exaltation therefore, properly and strictly consists in *a manifestation in the human nature*, which for a time had veiled the divine, *of the same glory which he had eternally possessed as the Son of God*. This we are taught in his own intercessory prayer—“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee, before the world was.”

It was with a manifest and most impressive propriety, that this exaltation should succeed immediately to his humiliation. Such is the representation of scripture. “He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Thus it was that the Sun of righteousness, on passing from under the dark cloud of his humiliation and suffering, shone and astonished with the most striking and glorious lustre. The ignominy of the cross was thus wiped away; and God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, gave to his people also the evidence, that when their reliance and expectations are placed on him, their faith and hope shall be in God.

Let us now consider the several particulars of our Redeemer’s exaltation, as they are stated in the answer before us.

1. He “rose again from the dead on the third day.”

We have already had occasion to observe, that it was a part only of three days, during which our Redeemer lay in the grave. The time of his continuance there indeed, was not equal even to the space of two whole days. Yet as our Lord was in the tomb a part of three days, and it was customary with the Jews and agreeable to the language of scripture, to represent an event as extending through all the days on which any part of it took place, there was a complete fulfilment, according to the then current use of language, of the declaration, that “the Son of man should be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Our Redeemer was put to death on the eve of the Jewish Sabbath, Friday afternoon, and rose very early on the morning of the first day of the week, called from this circumstance, *the Lord’s day*; and which, from the age of the apostles to the present time, the great mass of Christians have observed as a day of sacred

rest, in place of the Jewish Sabbath—The reason and propriety of this will be explained, if we are spared to discuss the fourth commandment.

In the mean time, let us give a few moments of our most engaged attention, to that essential article of a Christian's faith and hope, the resurrection of Christ. That this was an event to take place in the person of the Messiah, was prefigured to Abraham, in his receiving his son Isaac, as it were from the dead. It was foretold to the fathers, as is expressly affirmed by the apostle Paul in his discourse to the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia, who quotes a passage from the second Psalm, in proof of the fact—Acts xiii. 33. Our Lord himself, not only alluded to it on several occasions, but told his disciples of it in the most explicit terms. Mark ix. 31.—“He taught his disciples and said unto them—The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.” Again he said, “*After I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.*” The Jews therefore attempted to discredit the resurrection of Christ; and modern infidels still attempt the same thing; knowing that if they succeed in this, they unsettle at once the whole Christian system. On the other hand, the advocates of Christianity defend this point, as the citadel of their faith. Nay, if this one point be maintained, the Christian religion is indisputably established as of divine authority. Sherlock has written an able little work, entitled “The Trial of the Witnesses,” in which he has examined the evidence of our Lord's resurrection, on the strict principles and forms of taking testimony in the English courts of law; and has shown, that on those principles, and agreeably to that procedure, an upright judge and jury would be obliged to pronounce that Christ had indubitably risen from the dead. But the ablest piece on this subject, with which I am acquainted, is the production of Gilbert West.\* It is known

\* Since this lecture was delivered, the author has seen announced a treatise, which he has not perused, that is said to set the evidence of our Lord's resurrection, as given by the evangelists, in a still clearer light than was done by Mr. West.

to all who read their Bibles carefully, that the accounts given of the resurrection of Christ by the different evangelists, seem, at first view, to be hardly consistent with each other. It is said that West had doubted or disbelieved the truth of revelation, and that he first gave his attention to this subject, with a view to prove that the historians had contradicted each other, and therefore that the fact which they all asserted was unworthy of credit: that, however, on examining and comparing the evangelists, critically and closely, he found there was no contradiction: that, on the contrary, he perceived there was the most perfect harmony, and that the variety in their accounts was only a palpable proof that they did not write in concert, but like honest witnesses, each told the facts which he knew in his own way: in a word, that on a careful comparison of the facts of the case they all went to establish the same point, by various, but yet concordant and incontestable evidence. In whatever way he was led to it, he has certainly settled this point, beyond reasonable controversy—I advise you all to read the two books I have mentioned—The Trial of the Witnesses, and West on the Resurrection.

A summary of the evidence of our Lord's resurrection may be given thus—It rests on testimony; the testimony both of angels and of men. The angels testified to the women who came to the sepulchre, that he was not there, but was risen as he had told them. The apostles all asserted the truth of his resurrection, and the most of them laid down their lives in attestation of this fact. They unanimously declared that “God raised him up, on the third day, and showed him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God; even to us, says Peter, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.” This testimony, at the risk of life, was delivered before that very Sanhedrim who had put our Lord to death; and by that very disciple (as the mouth of the rest) who had before denied him.

Our Lord often appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, and gave them such proofs of his identity, as no mortal

could rationally disbelieve or doubt. He not only ate and drank with them, showed them the print of the nails in his hands and feet, and of the spear in his side, and made the unbelieving Thomas examine with his hands as well as his eyes, the scars of his wounds; but what was still more unequivocal, if possible, he adverted to what he had told them before his death, and to things which only he and they could possibly know. At one time he showed himself to no less than five hundred brethren.—He remained forty days on earth, that by his appearing frequently, and conversing familiarly and freely with his disciples, they might have the fullest conviction and satisfaction as to his resurrection, and that he might also instruct them in the nature of his kingdom, and in the manner in which it was to be extended, established, and governed.

It was surely one of the most contemptible artifices ever practised—and no doubt it was practised because a better could not be devised—which the chief priests and elders of the Jews employed, when they bribed the Roman soldiers to say, that his disciples came by night, and stole him away while they slept. The soldiers would never have said this, had they not been secured against punishment from the governor, if he should hear it: For in saying it, every one confessed himself guilty of a capital crime; because the Roman discipline made it death, in all cases, for a sentinel to sleep on his post. Beside, the thing in itself, was both incredible and self contradictory—Incredible, that they should sleep through the great earthquake which accompanied the rolling away of the stone by the angel; and self contradictory, because if they were asleep, they could not possibly know that his disciples had taken him away. But something must be said: and this was the best that his enemies could find to say.

You will remember, my children, that Christ rose from the dead as *a publick person*, representing all his spiritual seed, and as claiming in their behalf a complete discharge from the penalty of the divine law. Having fully paid the debt for

which he was committed to the prison of the tomb, justice required that he, the surety, should be discharged, and that no further demand should be made on those for whom he answered. His resurrection was the declaration of God, that justice was fully satisfied; and it is to be regarded as the divine assurance to every believer, that all his sins, for his surety's sake, shall certainly be remitted.

It is a most delightful theme of meditation, to dwell on the resurrection of Christ. It were well to think of it, especially on the morning of every Lord's day—To think of the completion of the work of redemption, when, like a mighty conqueror of sin, death, the grave, and hell, the Redeemer rose triumphant over all; giving to his believing people the most precious pledge of their acquittal from condemnation, of their protection from all those spiritual enemies over which he triumphed, and of their own glorious resurrection in the last day—when their bodies shall be made like unto his own glorious body, and dwell forever in his blissful presence.

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## LECTURE XXVI.

*Wherein consists Christ's exaltation?—continued.*

THE second step of our Lord's exaltation was “his ascending up into heaven.”

The place of Christ's ascension is well worthy of particular notice. It was from Mount Olivet, nigh to Bethany; from the very mountain, perhaps from the very spot, where, in his awful agony, his soul had been “exceeding sorrowful even unto death;” and he had “sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” What an interesting, what a well chosen contrast! How proper that on the spot where his disciples had seen his deep depression, they should witness his glorification; that from the place where he had

tasted, as far as innocence could taste, of the pains of hell, he should ascend to heaven; that from the ground once moistened with his blood and tears, he should rise to eternal joys. His eleven faithful apostles—the traitor Judas having gone to his own place—were the chosen witnesses of this glorious scene. Their Divine Master, we are told, led them out as far as Bethany.—Let us go with them, my children, guided by the word of truth. As they passed along, the Lord charged them not to depart from Jerusalem till they should have received the Holy Ghost, which he promised he would shortly send. He told them, of course, that this was his last personal interview with them on earth, and that he was just going to ascend to the Father. Yet, to raise their drooping spirits, he promised them his spiritual presence, without interruption—“Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”—But the place of separation is now reached—the time to part is come. He gathers the little group around him—I think I see them all kneel to receive his last blessing—He lifts up his hands in prayer and benediction; and while he is blessing them, behold! he rises from the ground. But still he blesses them—till his voice can no longer be heard. He ascends rapidly, but they follow him with eager eyes, till a cloud receives and covers him: And still they look at the place where they saw him last—They hope to catch one more glimpse of their dear departed Lord, and they look and look, till they are roused from their reverie by a voice—They cast their eyes downward, and see two angels clothed in white, who say—“Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven”—Then the holy apostles prostrate and worship their ascended Master. Beyond a reasonable question it was religious worship, which they offered him. How could it be any other? His body was gone into heaven. If they did not believe him present as God, their act was unmeaning and absurd.

Meanwhile, the ascended Saviour, making the bright cloud

his triumphal chariot, attended by and passing through crowds of adoring angels, went far on to a throne exalted above theirs, till he sat down on the right hand of God. This is sublimely shadowed forth in the 24th Psalm, which I recommend that you read attentively, in reference to this glorious event. The Psalm primarily related to the introduction of the ark to the holy of holies, in the Jewish tabernacle and temple; but ultimately and especially it refers to the entrance of the King of glory, the divine Immanuel, into his heavenly kingdom; and to his reception of his mediatorial throne, after conquering the powers of darkness, and leading captivity captive.

This last circumstance is considered in the Catechism, as another distinct step of his exaltation. In scripture, *the right hand* is always considered as the place of the greatest honour and dignity, and *sitting* implies rest and quietness. Christ's sitting on the right hand of the Father therefore, implies the quiet and peaceable possession of that matchless dignity and fulness of power, with which he is vested as the glorious King and head of his church.

The first and most illustrious act of the ascended, glorified and reigning Saviour, in execution of his work, was the mission of the promised Comforter, the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost—the fiftieth day after his resurrection, and the tenth, it would appear, after his ascension into heaven. You will observe that the mission of the Holy Ghost, is expressly declared to be the immediate act of Christ, by the apostle Peter, in explaining the wonderful appearances on the day of Pentecost. “This Jesus (says the apostle) hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses—Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, *he* hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.” He who was anointed with the Spirit without measure, and who was now seated on his mediatorial throne—in conformity with the will of the eternal Father, and in fulfilment of his own promise to send the Comforter, did now send him, with all his miraculous energies

and operations. The apostles themselves were immediately and fully enlightened into the nature of their mission, work and expectations. You never more hear of their looking for a temporal kingdom, or for any earthly distinctions—To spread the gospel, and to suffer and die for their Lord, was ever after, their highest ambition. Although men of no literary education, they now, by the instantaneous instruction of the Spirit of all wisdom, spake and discoursed with propriety, in twelve or fourteen different languages; and thus were qualified to spread the gospel throughout the world. But perhaps the greatest miracle of all was, that a single address of a fisherman of Galilee, under the guidance and application of the Holy Spirit, made, in one day, three thousand converts—converts, some of them, of the very betrayers and crucifiers of Him, who in this wonderful manner sent the Spirit, to convince them of sin, and to renew them unto holiness. Under the unerring guidance of this Holy Spirit, the apostles were also qualified to give us, without error, the sacred writings of the New Testament; and to publish the gospel, with an astonishing success, throughout the civilized world—in opposition to all the learning, power and superstition, which the world contained—the only means employed being truth and miracles.

The miraculous gifts of the Spirit have long since ceased, but his ordinary operations have not ceased, and never will to the end of time. To these operations, the renovation and conversion of every soul that is translated out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son, is altogether to be attributed; and the kingdom of Christ on earth is thus continued, established and extended, in opposition to all enemies; and it will extend, till the knowledge and love of God shall cover the earth as the waters do the seas. The sending of this glorious and blessed agent, thus to insure and perpetuate the benefits of his work, is a most important particular in the exaltation of Christ.

Meantime he sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, as the head of the church. There, as her glorious

Lord, as her divine Mediator, as her kind Intercessor and prevalent Advocate, he will continue to sit, till he shall have gathered all his people to himself, and made his foes his footstool.

The exaltation of Christ will be gloriously consummated, by "his coming to judge the world at the last day." How completely will the scenes of his humiliation then be reversed!—How wide and wonderful will be the contrast, when he who once suffered as a malefactor, shall sit as the judge of the universe, and pronounce the eternal destiny both of friends and foes!—the eternal destiny of two whole orders of immortal beings, angels and men! We are told expressly that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." What an infatuation—I cannot forbear the remark in passing—what an infatuation, to think that he of whom this is spoken, is nothing more than a mere man!

The time of the final judgment is unknown, both to men and angels. It is called in the Catechism the last day, because, after this, time shall be no longer. There will be no more succession of days and nights; but one perpetual day of light, comfort and joy, to the righteous; and one perpetual night of utter darkness, misery and wo, to the wicked.

The second coming of Christ will be in a manner the most splendid and glorious. All attempts to heighten it, by poetic figure or ornament, only cloud it. The simplest representation is the most sublime. "He shall come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory—in the glory of his Father with all the holy angels." He will be a *visible* judge. It is expressly said that "every eye shall see him"—Yes, my dear youth, as surely as your eyes now behold the objects on which they are fixed, so surely will they at last be fixed on Christ, as your final judge.

The place of judgment will be the aerial heavens—It is said that "we shall ascend to meet the Lord in the air." In some portion of space, sufficiently removed from our earth,

which will then be on fire, and which will eventually be burnt up, the judgment will sit. Those who are alive at the second coming of Christ, the Apostle tells us, "will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Those who are dead shall be awakened; "for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised." The pious dead, as if most ready to obey the summons, will rise first. But not a child of Adam, of any age, clime, or country, shall be overlooked, or left behind. What a host!

"No spot on earth, but has supplied a grave,  
And human skulls the spacious ocean pave,  
All's full of man; and at this dreadful turn,  
The swarm shall issue, and the hive shall burn."

It appears from scripture, that the righteous will be separated from the wicked, as soon as they rise.—From the commencement of the judgment they will be placed on the right hand of the Judge, and the wicked on the left. Angels, as well as men, we are expressly told, will then appear to be judged. The fallen angels are "reserved in chains of darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." They were the tempters of man to sin, and they are now to stand with him before the common Judge. This is one grand end and design of the judgment day: that as, through the intervention of Christ, man has been redeemed and Satan defeated, so, when the work is accomplished, all concerned in this work, may be collected together, not only to witness the exaltation and triumph of Christ, but to contribute to it—his friends, by receiving his approbation and sharing his glory; his enemies, by receiving the sentence of their condemnation, and being consigned to merited and endless misery.

Another design of the judgment is to vindicate, and make known to all, the equity of the Divine dispensations, and the justice of the Divine procedure. Then all the mysteries of Providence, we have reason to believe, will be unfolded; and God will show that in all cases, he has acted with perfect justice, wisdom, faithfulness and truth; and all inequali-

ties, as they now appear to us, will be explained and adjusted.

But another, and a great design of the judgment is, that from that time, the happiness of the righteous, and the misery of the wicked, may be greatly augmented. Both classes, we know, are made happy or miserable at death. But the Divine constitution is, that during the intermediate state, between death and the resurrection, they shall be less happy and less miserable, than after their souls and bodies are reunited. Hence the judgment day is represented as a great object of desire to the righteous, and of great apprehension and dread to the wicked.

As the righteous will rise first, so also they will be judged and acquitted first; because they are afterwards to be assessors with Christ, in passing sentence on devils and wicked men: That is, they will consent to his judgment as just, and say Amen, to the doom pronounced on the ungodly—"Know ye not, says the Apostle, that we shall judge angels?" It is the opinion of some, to which I rather incline, that we are authorized from scripture to say, that there will be no mention made of the sins of the righteous, in the day of judgment; that, being blotted out by the blood of Christ, they will be cancelled, as though they had never been. There is no question that all their good deeds will be brought into view—not only those which have been publick, but all their most secret acts of benevolence, piety and love—and that they will be rewarded, according to their works. The reward will be all of grace, and yet proportioned to the attainments and exertions of each individual.

On the other hand, all the secret vices and wickedness of the ungodly, in all their blackness and deformity, will be exposed to the universe. The heathen who have sinned without law, shall be judged without law—judged only for the violation of that law which was written on their hearts, and legible by the light of nature. But "those who have sinned under the law, shall be judged by the law." Those who have

enjoyed and rejected the gospel, will perish with the most awful condemnation.

The reverses which the day of judgment will exhibit, will be both fearful and delightful. Many a proud warrior and conqueror, who has waded to empire and renown through rivers of blood; many a despot who has filled a throne, supported by the oppression of hapless millions; many a petty tyrant who has inflicted on helpless slaves, or other inferiors, unceasing misery and torment; many a wealthy miser, who has ground the faces of the poor, that he might add to his splendid hoards; many a talented infidel, whose writings have gained him fame on earth, while they have led thousands to perdition—many of all these characters will wish, in all the agony of despair, that theirs had been the lot of the meanest saint, or even that of ordinary sinners. On the other hand, thousands of those whom the great ones of this world have treated with scorn or pity; have looked down upon as mean and contemptible; have regarded as enthusiasts or fools; will appear to have been the excellent of the earth, the honoured servants and children of God while they lived, and those whom he will now delight to acknowledge, and to crown with unfading honours, in the view of the assembled universe—To these, and to all on his right hand, the Judge will say, “come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” To those on the left hand, the terrific sentence will be—“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels—And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”

In closing this lecture I remark—

1. That the ascension and glorification of Christ, demonstrate that there is a local heaven—a place where his glorified body resides, where he is now the object of admiration and worship by angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, and to which all his saints will be gathered after the resurrection; when their former “vile bodies shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he

is able even to subdue all things unto himself." We know not, and it is not necessary to know, in what region of the immensity of space this local heaven is placed. It is enough to know that it exists, and that we are permitted to aspire to an admission to it; and to become members of the general assembly and church of the first born, who shall there surround the Redeemer's throne, and behold his glory, in a beatific vision, to all eternity.

2. Let us contemplate with holy wonder and delight, the state of our Redeemer's exaltation. God's ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts. In all that he does he acts like himself—like a God. But in the work of redemption there appear to be things, more wonderful than in any of his other works. It is not for us to say, whether we ought to be more astonished that God should condescend to unite his nature to ours, or to raise ours, by that union, to the height in which we contemplate it, in the exalted state of our Redeemer—a height, far beyond that of the tallest angel, or the brightest seraph, in the heavenly host.

"A thousand seraphs, strong and bright,  
Stand round the glorious Deity;  
But who amongst the sons of light  
Pretends comparison with thee?

"Yet there is one of human frame,  
Jesus, array'd in flesh and blood,  
Thinks it no robbery to claim  
A full equality with God.

"Their glory shines with equal beams,  
Their essence is for ever one:  
Though they are known by different names,  
The Father God, and God the Son.

"Then let the name of Christ our King  
With equal honours be ador'd;  
His praise let ev'ry angel sing;  
And all the nations own their Lord."

3. Let us often meditate on the judgment of the great day. Let us keep constantly in mind that for all we do, or say, or think, God will bring us into judgment: that then all

those actions of our lives which we may now most studiously and anxiously endeavour to conceal from the world, and to which we can hardly turn our own thoughts without shame and confusion; yea, that all the secret motives, and wishes, and desires of our souls, which have never eventuated in action—that all these will be disclosed to the universe, and that we must meet them, under the full blaze of heaven, at the tribunal of Christ. Oh! if the recollection of this truth were kept on our minds as it ought to be, it would have the most salutary influence on our whole conduct. Yes, my dear youth, and it would make you feel how important it is, that you immediately flee to the Lord Jesus Christ—that being pardoned through his blood, and clothed with his righteousness, you may escape the condemnation of his enemies, and receive the acquittal and reward of his friends, in the day when “he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.”

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## LECTURE XXVII.

*How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?  
How doth the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?  
What is effectual calling?*

THE next subject of discourse is contained in the 29th answer of our catechism, and is thus expressed—

“ We are made partakers of the redemption, purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us, by his Holy Spirit.” •

By *redemption* in this answer, we are to understand the whole of that salvation which is revealed and exhibited in the Gospel. This redemption is said to be *purchased*, because, having brought ourselves into a state of bondage and slavery, we could not be ransomed but at a great price. The Saviour himself declared, that he came “ to give his life a ransom

for many." Now, a ransom, you know, is nothing else than the price which is paid for the liberty of a captive or a slave—"Ye were not redeemed (says the apostle Peter) with corruptible things as silver and gold—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Of this redemption we are, in the answer before us, said to be *made* partakers:—That is, we do not make ourselves partakers, because, in ourselves, we are altogether without strength, as the apostle affirms, and utterly averse to spiritual good—"Ye will not come to me that ye might have life," said the Saviour. Redemption, therefore, is applied to us by the Divine agency—Not that we are treated as machines, but dealt with, as we shall see, according to that rational nature which God has given us; yet so that the application is truly of Him. In this application, the benefits of redemption, in all their extent, are conferred upon us and made our own, by way of *free gift*.

You will be careful to observe, that it is as necessary to our salvation that redemption should be *applied*, as that it should be *purchased* or procured. As medicines will not heal us, nor clothes warm us, nor food sustain us, unless they are used; so neither will all that Christ has done or prepared for us, be of the least avail, unless it is applied:—Nay it will not only do us no good, but it will sink us to an infinitely deeper condemnation, by our rejection of it.

This application of redemption must be *effectual*. It must produce the effect of opening the eyes of sinners, and of turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. There is an outward application, or exhibition rather, of the benefits of redemption, in Christian baptism, which is not effectual: that is, it is not *necessarily* and *uniformly* so. Divine and saving grace *may be* imparted in baptism, as it may at any other time. But we think it unscriptural, and practically dangerous, to say that it is *always* a concomitant of that ordinance. Simon Magus was baptized, and yet we have no reason to think that there was ever a moment in which he ceased to be "in the gall of bitterness and

in the bond of iniquity"—previously to the time when these words were used by the apostle, as descriptive of his then miserable state. Baptismal regeneration, it is to be feared, has often proved a dangerous and fatal reliance, to those who have built their hopes upon it.

The application of redemption is the office and work of the Holy Spirit; the third person of the adorable Trinity, called the *Holy* Spirit, because he is essentially holy; and because all his works and operations are of a like nature or character with himself. Whatever holiness is ever found in the human heart, is the effect of the operations of the Holy Spirit. It is to be remembered, that in the great work of our redemption, the three persons in the sacred Trinity, are all and equally concerned. Redemption is *ordained* by the Father, *purchased* by the Son, and *applied* by the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is called in the answer before us *his* Spirit (that is, the spirit of Christ,) because he is sent for this work more immediately by Christ, and through his mediation, and as the fruit of his purchase. "It is expedient for you (said the Saviour) that I go away; for, if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but, if I depart, I will send him unto you"—and afterward—"He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Here it also appears, that in the application of redemption by the Holy Spirit, he makes use of the truths of the written word. These truths, when communicated by reading and preaching, he effectually shows to the soul, so as to obtain its cordial approbation of them: and hence you see both our obligation and encouragement, to attend diligently and carefully to the word of God, and to pray for his blessed Spirit, to give it a saving application to our hearts.—This leads us to consider the next answer in the Catechism, which is—

"The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling." In our natural state, we are all connected with our first covenant head, Adam, and are subjected with him to the penalty of the broken covenant of

works. When we are interested savingly in the redemption of Christ, it is done by taking us away from our former covenant state, and bringing us under the covenant of grace, in which the Saviour, as our new covenant head, has completely answered all the demands of the first covenant in behalf of all his people. Now, this is done, by "*uniting us to Christ*," as the Catechism expresses it; uniting us to Christ the second Adam, who repairs and restores the ruins of the first. This union with Christ does, as it were, identify the soul of every believer with him; so that in virtue of this union, the believer is entitled to all that Christ has merited, purchased, and promised. This union is no technical fiction of theology. It is often mentioned and dwelt on in scripture, in the most interesting manner. The blessed Redeemer himself appeared to dwell on it with delight, in his last intercessory prayer—to dwell with delight on the *oneness* of himself and his redeemed people. It is compared in scripture to the union between husband and wife, between the head and the members, between the root and the branches, between the foundation and the superstructure.

The bond of this union on our part is *faith*. Faith is that grace which instrumentally links the believing soul to the Saviour; or ingrafts it into him; or makes it a part of his mystical body. This faith is wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit—it is a grace of his production. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." In a word then, the bonds of this union are *the Spirit*, on Christ's part, and *faith* on our part; both these concur in their order. Christ, in the language of the Apostle Paul, FIRST apprehends the sinner by his Spirit, and the sinner THEN apprehends Christ by faith. It is in the great work of our *effectual calling*, that the Spirit thus apprehends, or takes an effectual hold on the soul of a sinner, unites it to Christ, and thus insures its salvation. This introduces the next answer in the Catechism—

"Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in

the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel." The two last questions and answers, which we have just considered, are but preparatory and introductory to this. In that which is now before you, my dear youth, you have an account of that great inward work, which must take place in each of your hearts, if you ever enter the kingdom of heaven. This answer, therefore, is infinitely important to you all—Not one in the system can be compared with it, in practical interest, to those of you who are thinking with some seriousness about religion; and yet do not suppose that you have at present, the religion which will save your souls. Here you are told what such religion is, and how it comes to be possessed. Will you not attend to this with all the powers of your minds? Will you not try to understand what effectual calling is, and to accompany the hearing with prayer, that God may make you the subjects of it?

Here I have a few preliminary observations to offer, which may serve to shorten the subsequent discussion; and which to me appear of great practical importance in themselves. I remark then, that it is difficult to preserve almost any truth from being abused. It may be abused, not only by design, but by negligence and inattention—we slide into the abuse: and in this manner I suspect that an abuse has been, and now is, practised by a great many, on the following undoubted truths, namely: that effectual calling, or true conversion, (which is the same thing) is a great work;—that a marvellous change then takes place in the mind;—that there are cases in which it takes place suddenly, and almost miraculously;—that these cases happen frequently at those seasons which are called revivals of religion, when almost every body is affected, and converts are wonderfully multiplied. All these I firmly believe to be truths—important truths; and God forbid that I should say a word to disparage them. But I really think they are often abused, and that imperceptibly, by those that hold them. Pious people themselves

may abuse them; so as not to look for the conversion of their children, but in some striking manner, or at some remarkable season of the outpouring of the Spirit of grace. And if this be so, youth, who have received a Christian education, and who have some seriousness of mind without practical piety, are still more likely to practise this abuse—I believe they do practise it among ourselves. They think that regeneration is a supernatural change; that it must take place in such a marvellous manner, and that all they can do, in an ordinary way, has so little connexion with it, that they may even give it up, as a hopeless thing to themselves, till some time of general awakening comes; when, as they suppose, they shall be taken hold of powerfully (they know not how,) and become pious Christians along with the multitude. Now here is a great abuse of the truths which have been specified. Regeneration is indeed a great and supernatural change; but the effectual calling which issues in it, often takes place so gradually, and is so mingled with the effects of natural conscience, of increasing light and good education, that the most undoubted subjects of it, oftentimes cannot trace distinctly in their own minds, the steps by which they have arrived at it. Revivals of religion are glorious periods, in which great additions are, in a short time, made to the church. Yet, take all those additions together, and probably many more have hitherto been effectually called, at times when there were no special or general revivals, than in all the times at which such revivals have existed.\* The practical use therefore which I wish you to make of these remarks is this—Not *so* to conceive of effectual calling, or true conversion, as to suppose that you are not to seek it, look for it, and hope for it, but in some wonderful way, or at some extraordinary time. God works on different minds in different methods. When per-

\* These lectures were delivered in the winters of the years 1811 and 1812. Since that period, revivals of religion have happily been so numerous in our own country, as probably to render the above statement, in an exclusive reference to the United States, not correct, so far as the present generation is concerned. But the statement refers to the Christian world at large; and thus taken, it is still believed to be true, and therefore it has been permitted to stand as originally made.

sons have received a religious education, have been preserved from out-breaking sins, have always possessed tenderness of conscience, have not neglected prayer, have carefully attended on publick ordinances, and been familiar with their Bibles;—they are often effectually called, and soundly converted, without any great convulsion of the soul. There is, no doubt, a period when divine grace is first implanted, but the subject of it cannot tell when. To his apprehension it seems only as if his seriousness and light have gradually increased, till at length, and after a good deal of doubt, he can say, that whereas he was once blind now he sees. And I have long remarked that Christians who can give only this account of themselves, are frequently among those who are most exemplary, most humble, most improving, most steadfast, and most fruitful in their Christian profession. My children, you have been religiously educated—many of you I trust, have never lost your tenderness of conscience, nor wholly neglected prayer to God. Cherish the sensibility of your consciences; beg God to enlighten you more and more; beg him to impart his grace to change your hearts, that you may be regenerated, although there should be no general revival of religion. But, indeed, what have I said?—If you would all take this advice, it would make a revival, and one too of the most hopeful kind—Happy will be those individuals, who shall take the advice, let the number who reject it, be what it may.

Let us now consider the first clause of the answer before us, which stands thus—“Effectual calling is the work of God’s spirit.”

The difference between an *act* and a *work*, has been explained to many of you, when you repeated your catechism to your pastors. An act is a *single* exertion or operation, and takes place and is finished *at once*. A work is a *series*, or continuation of acts or operations; and continues for some length of time. Now as effectual calling consists, as the answer shows, of several progressive steps, it is, of course, a *work*. It should however be observed and recollect, that

the several steps or gradations of advance in this work, although capable of being separately considered, are not so separated in experience, as that one is always completed before another is begun. In discourse we can distinguish them, and it is useful to do so. But when they take place in the mind of an individual, the exercises which constitute them, are often, to a certain degree, mingled together. The subjects of these exercises are not like persons making advances in science. They do not make one finished attainment, and then pass on to another, in a regular and unvaried course. On the contrary, he who is effectually called, seldom, perhaps, thinks of the several parts or steps of his calling, till the whole is completed; when, by reflection, he may perceive that he has shared in all.

The word *calling*, in the answer before us, deserves your particular notice. Men are *outwardly* called to repentance and newness of life, by providential dispensations, and especially by the preaching of the gospel. These calls however are often not effectual—Alas! how few regard them as they ought. But the calling which we here contemplate is never disregarded. It may be, and usually is, effected by outward means, and yet it sometimes seems to take place without them. It is however *inward* in its nature, reaching to all the powers and recesses of the soul, and engaging them most earnestly in the great work of turning from sin to holiness, from the power of Satan unto God. Hence it is denominated *an effectual call*; and is very frequently mentioned in sacred scripture, where the people of God are said to be “called according to his purpose;” and “called to be saints;” and to be “partakers of the heavenly calling;” and are exhorted to “give all diligence to make their calling and election sure;” and of whom it is said, “Who [i. e. God] hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” It is the special office of the Holy and blessed Spirit of God, to give this inward and effectual call to the soul; and his sacred

influences are constantly to be sought in prayer, for this purpose.

In effectual calling, the first step is to *convince us suitably of our sin and misery*. There are very few who will not acknowledge that they are sinners. Sometimes, when natural conscience is wounded by the commission of enormous and reproachful sins, the sense of guilt may be exceedingly pungent. But all this is, too often, transient in its duration, and imperfect in its nature. It is quite another matter when the Holy Spirit performs this work, as a part of effectual calling. Then a conviction of guilt is bound on the conscience, and an abiding sense of misery is felt, under the apprehension of the divine displeasure. In some, and especially in those who have been great and flagitious offenders, the pain arising from this conviction of sin, and consequent apprehension of the divine wrath, is awful indeed. The knowledge of this, and the dread of it in their own case, sometimes makes unsanctified sinners stifle the conviction of sin, when it begins to take place. A fear of the pain which may attend on true repentance, is, I am persuaded, often the reason why serious impressions are banished and dissipated. But this is unspeakably foolish, in every view. Suppose it the most painful that is ever realized, and it is still infinitely rather to be chosen than the eternal pains of hell. But the apprehension is, in most cases, imaginary altogether. Even in great prodigals, true repentance is often a gentle work, although it is ever a deep one. The account which the eminent John Newton has published of himself, furnishes a remarkable instance of this: and the narrative which Bishop Burnet has given of the repentance of the profligate Earl of Rochester, is not much different. Oftentimes, indeed, pious people have wished that their convictions of sin had been far more keen and painful than they have ever felt. The Holy Spirit deals with each individual in this respect, in a wise and sovereign manner. Some are convinced suddenly, and others gradually—Some more, and others less painfully. In some, the whole process seems like the natural effect of reflection

and consideration, and a degree of hope is mingled with conviction from the very first.

But in whatever way genuine conviction of sin takes place, the essence of it is this—The sinner is made thoroughly sensible that he is, by nature and by practice, a guilty, polluted, inexcusable offender, before his God; and that he is in a truly miserable state, from having lost the friendship of his Maker, and being exposed to his just and endless displeasure. These perceptions, resting and abiding with weight on the mind, constitute the essence of this part of the work: And these are necessary, not because there is any merit in them, for there is none; nor because by themselves they constitute true religion, for they do not—if any rest here, they rest short of the kingdom of heaven. But a sense of guilt and misery is necessary to make the sinner loath himself, and abhor his sin; and to render him earnest in seeking a Saviour, and ready to accept him as he is offered.

Accordingly, the next step in effectual calling, as stated in the answer before us, is—"enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ." "What must I do to be saved?" will be the importunate demand of every sinner, convinced of his guilt in the manner just described. This inquiry, indeed, may not be always uttered to others, but it will always be felt by the individual concerned, in all its force. You will now see him reading the word of God (if he be able to read it) with a care and an attention to which he had before been unaccustomed; and seeking for instruction from the pulpit, from books, or from conversation, with the deepest interest.

Making use of these means, the Holy Spirit, either more suddenly or more gradually (for there is as much diversity here as in the former particular) enlightens the mind into the knowledge of Christ. The understanding is opened to understand the scriptures; to discern with some clearness the gospel plan of salvation by Christ; to perceive the practical use of his offices; to receive the knowledge of his atonement, righteousness and fulness—to see, in a word, that he is a Saviour of matchless excellence, inexhaustible sufficiency,

and unspeakable suitableness. Much may have heretofore been heard about Christ by the anxious sinner; but now, feeling as he does a deep interest in his inquiries, and being enlightened by the Spirit of unerring truth, he sees with an impression never known before, that Christ Jesus is indeed a Saviour, exactly fitted to his state and necessities; able to save to the very uttermost all that come unto God by him; and willing to save, without money and without price. He sees too, that Christ is freely tendered—sincerely offered, with all his benefits, to every one who is willing to accept him.

Some have much clearer and fuller views of the kind here described than others. But it is essential to all, that they come to understand and be persuaded, that there is really “no salvation in any other” but in Christ alone; and that he is able and willing to save all those who truly commit their souls into his hands. There must be such an understanding and persuasion of these great and glorious truths, as shall produce a real, engaged, and pressing desire, to obtain a personal interest in, and union with Christ.

The *renewing of the will* is the next step in effectual calling. In this the very essence of regeneration consists. The will is the seat, so to speak, of the moral action of the soul. Here lies our depravity in our natural state—The will and affections have taken a wrong bias—they are obstinately set on sin, and opposed to holiness. You cannot force them to change that bias. It is the bias of nature—of corrupt nature—and it requires the interposition of the God of nature—of him who can give us a new nature—to change this bias. You may reason as you will, you may be fully convinced yourself that the course of sin is wrong and ruinous; but still there is that wretched, prevalent, unchanged, sinful propensity, remaining in all its force. Persons under those exercises which are included in effectual calling, sometimes get to see this truth in a very clear and strong light. I once conversed with a sensible female, in this state of mind, who told me that she was satisfied of all that I have stated in the preceding part of

this discussion; satisfied that it must be a supernatural agent that had engaged her attention to the state of her soul; satisfied that she was a guilty and perishing sinner; satisfied too that Christ was both able and willing to save her soul. "But, ah! (said she) I have no will to choose and commit my soul to him for salvation, in the way he requires; I have no affection for him at all—and without this I certainly perish. What shall I do!" The answer was—the same God who has brought you thus far, can carry you through—can powerfully and sweetly dispose you to embrace the Saviour. Then I saw exemplified, what I before well knew to be a fact, that the doctrine of our dependance on God for his grace (against which some quarrel so bitterly) is the most encouraging doctrine in the world, to a mind truly enlightened, and rightly exercised—The thought that God might, and perhaps would, do for her, what she clearly saw she would never do for herself, saved this woman from despair—And very shortly afterwards, what she looked for was realized. Her will and affections, did in the most full and delightful manner, choose and centre in Christ, as all her salvation and all her desire. This however was, I know, a case in which the party concerned had uncommonly clear views of the state of her own soul. In hundreds and thousands of instances, where the change is as real and as genuine as that I have mentioned, the progress of the mind is not observed or seen, with any such distinctness—The will and affections are found to be changed; but, for a time at least, it is not known by the party how, or when it was done. President Edwards states this to have been the case with himself. He was always a close thinker—He was anxious about the state of his soul, and was praying and examining divine truth. He had quarrelled, long and ardently, with the doctrines of divine grace and sovereignty. At length, he says, he seemed to understand and see a glory in them, that made him love them. But he thought, at the time, that he only happened to get the true view of them, which he had not been able to take before. A true view indeed it was; but he afterwards discovered that the change was in his heart

—in his will and affections—and not in any new intellectual perceptions of the subject itself.

This change of the will and affections is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit. It is done, in the *view* of divine truth, but the Spirit is the agent. *How* he does it, we know not. It is expressly likened, in scripture, to the influence of the wind—a powerful but an invisible agent. We know, however, that no violence or compulsive influence is used. The creature acts, all the time, with the most perfect freedom. All we can say is—“He is made willing in a day of God’s power.”

After the renovation of the will, the soul, under the same sacred influence by which the renewal was effected, is “persuaded and enabled to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel”—This has been so much anticipated, that it will not be necessary to detain you long with it. The embracing of Christ as he is freely offered in the gospel, or the exercise of saving faith, is the act of a new nature. The old man is corrupt, and never puts forth a holy exercise; and it is evident that the new nature must exist before it can act. But it always acts faith in Christ, when it does exist. The same blessed Spirit who changes the heart, certainly, and in all instances, leads it to Jesus Christ, and in the language of the answer, “persuades and enables it to embrace him.” This is most happily expressed. The soul sees such an excellence, amiableness, and suitableness in Christ, under the Spirit’s influence, that it is ready to say—“How can I possibly refuse to obey, trust and love, such a Saviour—He is altogether lovely, he is the chief among ten thousands.” Thus, it is *persuaded*: And aided by the same blessed agent, it is also *enabled*, in the truest and most unreserved manner, to embrace Christ—To receive him with open arms, and to lay hold of him as emphatically *the Saviour* of the soul—placing all its dependance, truly and delightfully, on him alone, for a complete salvation; for pardon, justification, sanctification, preservation and eternal life.

Here again, it is to be noted, that the clearness and sensi-

bility with which different true believers close with Christ, is very various. With some it is done with rapture and ecstasy. By others it is done with great calmness. And by many, I doubt not, who do it truly, it is done so feebly and faintly, or rather, with such indistinct perceptions of their own real acts, that they long doubt and fear whether they have done it at all. But what is essential is, really, practically, and heartily to approve of the way of salvation by Christ, and rest and trust in him, as the "all in all" of the soul—Those who do this embrace him in a saving manner—The Lord grant that you and I, my dear youth, may thus embrace him to our eternal benefit. Amen.

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## LECTURE XXVIII.

*What benefits do they that are effectually called partake of in this life?*

*What is justification?*

WE are to begin the present lecture with considering that—"They that are effectually called, do in this life partake of justification, adoption, and sanctification; and the several benefits which, in this life, do either accompany or flow from them." This answer is to be considered chiefly as introductory to several answers which follow it. To enter far into any of the subjects of these answers would, you perceive, be only to anticipate what a proper discussion of those topics will demand, when they come in order before us. All therefore that I shall remark farther, on the answer now in our view is, that it should serve to impress on our minds this important truth,—that all the blessings and benefits of redemption are indissolubly connected, or linked together; and that they are all insured to every individual, who is *effectually called* by the grace of God to that vital union with Christ which was described in the last lecture. Hear the words of infallible

truth—"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren: Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Let us now consider the next interesting answer in the catechism—"Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight; only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone." In this answer is explained God's method of forgiving sinners and receiving them into his favour, as it is revealed in the gospel; and which, but for that revelation, we could never have known. Here the great problem is solved, which perplexed and confounded all the heathen moralists and philosophers, namely, how God can pardon sin in consistency with his own honour and glory. Here it is shown, that God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. What wretched folly, as well as wickedness is it, for any who call themselves Christians, to deny this doctrine; to ungospelize the gospel; to throw themselves back into all the darkness of heathenism; to have no ground to hope for pardon, but that which is common to them and to those who are denominated virtuous pagans. It was well said by Luther, that the doctrine of justification before God, by the imputed righteousness of Christ alone, is the doctrine of a standing or a falling church—meaning, that the church which maintains this doctrine, in its purity and fulness, will prosper; and that no other can or will.

You will recollect my dear youth, that when we discussed the nature of our Redeemer's priestly office, I showed you at some length, the weakness and fallacy of the objections which the enemies of gospel truth bring against the doctrine of imputation; both as it relates to the imputation of the sins of his people to their Surety Saviour, and the imputation of his perfect righteousness to them. Our attention at this time, therefore, need not be arrested or interrupted, by removing those

objections. We may go on without delay in the presentation and illustration of this precious and fundamental truth of the gospel, just as it is given to us in the sacred scriptures, and expressed in the answer before us.

Our first object must be to obtain a clear understanding of the word *justification* itself. You will, then, be careful to observe that this is what is called a *juridical* term—that is, it is a word used in, and borrowed from, courts of justice among men. When a person who has been arraigned, or brought to the bar, is, upon trial or inquiry, pronounced by the judge to be righteous, and in open court acquitted and discharged—such a person is said to be justified. Much pains have been taken by those who are, from various reasons, opposed to the gospel doctrine of justification, to show that the word does not always in sacred scripture carry with it the import of a judicial sentence of acquittal. Witsius, in his Economy of the Covenants, under the article *justification*, an article which will richly reward the pains of any of you who will read it carefully—Witsius has there shown in a most accurate and satisfactory manner, what are the several senses of this word, both in the Old Testament and the New—for it frequently occurs in both. And he has most unequivocally proved that its forensic or juridical signification, is not only its primary and general sense, but its invariable meaning, whenever it is used to denote a sinner's acquittal before his God. A single remark may make this evident. It is opposed to condemnation—as in that passage “it is God who justifieth, who is he that condemneth?” Now, as condemnation does never imply the making of a person guilty, but the sentence pronounced on him for being so, in like manner, its contrasted term *justification*, cannot mean the making of a person righteous, but the declaration that he is righteous. To justify a person, then, is not to make him righteous, but to declare him to be so, upon the ground of law and the trial of a competent judge. It is in regeneration and sanctification, that men are made—as far as in this life they are ever made—inherently holy. In *justification*, they are *legally*

*discharged* from the guilt of all their sins. Regeneration and sanctification are graces wrought *within* us—justification is something that takes place *without* us, and is not our act at all, but the act of God. These things, therefore, are never to be confounded.

“It is God that justifieth,” saith the apostle. Witsius, in the place before cited, has excellently shown, that it is God, essentially considered in the person of the Father, who is especially the *justifier* of his people, in respect of judiciary power and authority. But he also shows that our Lord Jesus Christ is likewise said to justify, in respect to the dispensation or exercise of that power. And that the Holy Spirit is said to justify, as making application of the blood or righteousness of Christ, on account of which we are justified.

Justification, in the answer before us, is called “an act of God’s free grace.” It is called an *act*, because, like the sentence or decision of a judge, it is done and completed at once; and not carried on gradually like a work of time. It is called an act of God’s *free grace*, because this grace is the sole moving cause in our justification.—Thus it is said in the very words of inspiration—“Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.” If it be asked, how it is an act of *free grace*, by which we are justified, since it is through the redemption that is in Christ? the answer is this—The redemption that is in Christ, is the channel through which justifying grace freely flows unto us. It was infinite grace that provided a Saviour; pure grace that led the soul to, and gave it an interest in, the Saviour; and therefore, an act of free grace is clearly performed when the sinner is declared to be justified in virtue of his righteousness. To the Saviour himself, it is indeed an act of strict justice, that his people should be justified, since he has paid the full price of it. But to his people who receive the benefits of his redemption, it is grace from the foundation to the top stone. Justice is indeed satisfied, in all the extent of its demands; but it is by the provision of God, the work of the Saviour, and the application of his Spirit. From these sources alone, all the benefits received in justification flow forth to the be-

liever, and he therefore is plainly the recipient of the purest grace.

In justification there are two parts distinctly noticed, in the answer before us—1. The pardon of all our sins. 2. The acceptance of us as righteous in the sight of God. The first of these is necessary and antecedent to the second. By the pardon of sin God absolves the sinner from the condemnation of the law, on account of Christ's satisfaction for sin. For till the sentence of the broken law be absolved by pardon, it is impossible that our persons can be accepted, or any blessing of the covenant be conferred upon us.

In pardon, it is the *guilt* of sin which is removed—that guilt by which the subject of it is exposed to eternal wrath as its just reward, for “the wages of sin is death.” Nor can the guilt of sin ever return upon a pardoned and justified believer. The obligation to punishment being removed, or once taken off, can never again recur, according to the economy of grace; because there is *no* condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, and whom he loveth he loveth unto the end. In justification, all past and present guilt is pardoned, and the assurance is given, that new acts of pardon shall be granted after every future transgression. But be careful to understand this distinctly. The meaning is, that God will always bring the justified believer to deep repentance and humiliation for his known offences, and also to the dereliction of his sin; and then will grant him a fresh act of pardon. To my apprehension it is perfectly preposterous to speak of sins being pardoned before they are committed. But it is a glorious gospel truth, that when God has once pardoned a sinner through Jesus Christ, he brings him into a state in which he will never fail to humble him and bring him to true repentance for every future sin, and then grant him pardon for it. And you will accordingly, be very particular in noticing and remembering, that in a passage already quoted, the apostle explicitly declares—“Whom he justified, them he also glorified”—The apostle does here unequivocally assert, that all who have ever been in a justified state,

will be glorified—This leads to the consideration of the second thing in justification, which is, our being accepted as righteous in the sight of God.

Among men, indeed, a criminal may be pardoned, and yet it may not be the fact that he is considered as righteous in the eye of the law: Nay, it is scarcely correct to say that he is pardoned, if he is just and righteous in the eye of the law. He may be discharged from punishment, but pardon itself implies guilt. Here, therefore, the parallel fails between the divine procedure and that which takes place among men; for those whom God pardons or forgives, he both accounts their persons righteous in his sight, and receives them into perpetual favour. This is done, as the remainder of the answer before us states—"Only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone."

The righteousness of Christ is commonly considered as constituted by his active and passive obedience. In his active obedience is usually included, the holiness of his nature and the righteousness of his life, in full and perfect conformity to the whole law, without the least defect at any time or in any degree. Thus the entire equity and reasonableness of the law were shown; and the reflection and dishonour cast upon it by the disobedience of man were completely removed, by its receiving the honour of the perfect and ceaseless obedience of the eternal Son of God—He magnified the law and made it honourable.

The passive obedience of Christ includes his satisfaction for sin, by bearing, in all their extent, the inflictions of the curse of the broken law of God due to all his people "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree—he was made a curse for us"—His infinite dignity and worth, connected with his inconceivable sufferings, rendered the short endurance of those sufferings as complete a satisfaction to the penal demands of the law, as could have been made by the endless torments of all those in whose room and stead he stood. The sufferings and death of Christ are called his *passive obedience*, because they were, on his part, entirely voluntary, and undergone in

perfect acquiescence in the will and appointment of the eternal Father.

The *union or aggregate* of this active and passive obedience of Christ, constitutes that complete and finished righteousness, which is the formal meritorious cause of the justification of every saint. It is on this account, precisely, and no other, that believers are accepted of God as righteous. We are told expressly that “the righteousness of God is UPON all them that believe.” This is the declaration of infallible truth. But this righteousness cannot, in the language of scripture, be *upon* them that believe, otherwise than by being imputed or reckoned to them.

Much noise has been made about the words *imputed righteousness*, as well as the phrase *the satisfaction of Christ*. But it may be truly said that the whole is noise, and nothing else. The substantial ideas conveyed by those words and phrases, and all that we intend or mean by them, are fully and clearly conveyed in other language, into which they are not introduced at all; and though we will not relinquish the words *imputed righteousness*, because they are proper, precise, and scriptural words; yet, if the ideas for which they stand are admitted by those who reject them, we desire to have no controversy on the subject. I know of no expression in the New Testament, in which the doctrine of imputation, in both its parts, that is, the imputation of our sins to Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness to us, is more distinctly and unequivocally expressed, than in a text where the word *imputation* is not used. It is this—“For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” I cannot conceive what rational meaning can be affixed to this declaration but this alone—“That Christ was treated as a sinner on our account, that we might be treated as perfectly righteous on his account;” and this is precisely what we mean by *imputation*.\* We have no conception that our personal sins be-

\* It has been said by those who object to the doctrine of imputed righteousness, that “what is actually not ours, cannot justly be reckoned or accounted

came Christ's personal sins—God forbid!—And we have no idea that his personal righteousness becomes our personal righteousness. We only mean and say, that his righteousness is *imputed* to us—that is, reckoned, or computed as ours, or set to our account. We say, that God so accounts or reckons to us the righteousness of Christ, as to *treat us* as if we had obeyed the law and satisfied justice in our own persons.—Nay, we must not omit to mention, that the people of God, in consequence of being invested with the righteousness of Christ, will be entitled to, and actually receive, a heavenly inheritance, unspeakably richer and more glorious than they would have received, if their first covenant head had remained sinless.

We are said, in the Catechism, to be pardoned and accepted “*only*” for the righteousness of Christ; because a sinner can make no other valid plea before God for pardon and acceptance, than that Christ his surety has fulfilled the violated covenant of works for him—fulfilled all righteousness in his behalf. The law required a fulfilment, in which every act of obedience should be a perfectly sinless act. Now, not one of

as ours.” But in regard to this, I must say that it seems to me scarcely to deserve the name of a quibble—it is rather an unqualified false assertion. Take the common illustration of this topic—An individual is imprisoned for a debt which he can never pay. A benevolent individual pays it for him. Cannot this payment be reckoned or accounted as being made by the prisoner himself, and he be discharged and treated as owing nothing, as really as if he had paid the debt out of his own property and purse? and may not the benefactor demand the prisoner’s discharge, as a matter of justice? He certainly may; all righteous laws will permit it; and the whole transaction sometimes takes place in fact, in well ordered society. Take another illustration—The offspring of a beggar is adopted by a man of wealth. May not this adopted offspring be reckoned, or accounted, as the child of his benefactor, and become his heir, and even bear his name, as really as if the adopted party had come out of the loins of his putative father? who knows not that such a procedure as this sometimes actually takes place among men?

We admit after all that there is something *unique*, or without a parallel, in the justification of a believing sinner. By faith, a mysterious union, or oneness, takes place between him and his Saviour. Of this oneness, the Saviour expressly speaks in his last intercessory prayer—Elsewhere he compares it to the union of a branch with the vine; and it is frequently referred to by the Apostle Paul. It is in virtue of this union, this oneness, this identity of the believer with his glorious spiritual head, that he becomes a partaker of all that has been merited by that head for the members of his mystical body—The righteousness of his head, becomes the believer’s righteousness, and he is entitled to all its benefits. I have never seen this point more clearly proved, and more powerfully illustrated, than in the celebrated Hooker’s “learned discourse of Justification,” &c.

our acts is of this kind. But of this very kind were all the acts of Christ; and therefore, his perfect sinless acts, and not our imperfect acts mingled with sin, must have the whole concern in the matter of our justification.

No act that is imperfect can ever justify, by a law which requires perfection. The imperfection of the act, so far as it exists, is a violation of the law, and therefore needs pardon, instead of being entitled to reward. If therefore the righteousness which justifies us must be a perfect righteousness, none of our acts can make any part of it, for they are all imperfect—This is clear to demonstration. It is therefore the perfect righteousness of Christ, and that *only*, which is the efficient cause of our justification, in the eye of the perfect law of God. This righteousness is “received by faith alone.” Yet, as we have just seen, the excellence of the act of faith, by which it is received, has no share in the righteousness that justifies. That act of faith, although sincere, is yet imperfect, and therefore needs pardon, in place of claiming to be a part of the righteousness which justifies. The same may also be said of repentance—it is indispensable to salvation. But it forms no part of the righteousness that justifies. That, as we have seen, must be a perfect righteousness, and can be nothing else. But our repentance is imperfect; and the riches of God’s grace in the gospel is manifest in this very particular, that for Christ’s sake our acts are accepted, if sincere, although imperfect—accepted to their proper end—not as having any share in our justification, but as evidence of our compliance with the terms of the Gospel covenant, and our consequent title to a gracious reward.

Faith and repentance have by some been called *conditions* of salvation; and controversy has sometimes ensued on the propriety of their being thus denominated. But, in my apprehension, this is a needless controversy. The fact is this—There are two meanings of the word *condition*; one of which is certainly not applicable to this point, and the other as certainly is. By *condition* is sometimes meant *a valuation*

*ble consideration*, in consequence of which something is conferred. In this sense faith and repentance are not *conditions* of salvation: for they are not the valuable consideration, in consequence of which salvation is conferred on us. This valuable consideration is, as we have shown, nothing but the righteousness of Christ. But the word condition is sometimes used to denote *something which must take place before a stipulated benefit can be obtained*. In this sense, faith and repentance may be called *conditions* of salvation. They must always take place in persons of adult age, before salvation can be obtained, or justly be expected.

You will, however, be careful to observe, that it is the grace of faith alone, which is even *instrumentally* concerned in our justification. Justifying faith will, indeed, be always accompanied by every other genuine grace of the Christian. But faith alone is concerned in justification, because it is the office only of this grace to *receive and rest on Christ*. We do not receive and rest on Christ by repentance, by hope, or by charity, but by faith alone; and therefore, it is by faith alone, as the proper *instrument* for the work, that we are justified.

There has also been a controversy, whether we are not to consider good works as connected with faith, in the matter of our justification. But there is no proper ground for this controversy. All do or ought to admit, that in adult age, good works, as far as opportunity for them is given, always accompany saving faith—They prove it to be saving; and in this way justify our profession of faith before the world; which is precisely what St. James intends, when he says we are justified by works, and not by faith only. We are justified *before men*, by the works which flow from faith, and which men can see. But in our justification *before God*, the Apostle Paul teaches that no work, no act of man, has any meritorious agency, more or less. We owe it all to the righteousness of Christ. Faith receives and rests on this; because, as has been shown, it is proper to faith, and to no other grace, to do so. But this very act of faith, although sincere, is

still imperfect, and its imperfection is pardoned through that very righteousness of Christ on which it rests, and to which it leaves the *whole undivided honour and merit* of our justification and salvation.

My dear youth, in concluding this lecture, in which I have endeavoured shortly to explain a fundamental doctrine of the revealed will of God, let me entreat you—

1. Not to indulge in speculations on this article of our faith, beyond what is plainly laid down in the sacred oracles. The most serious practical evils have often resulted from a licentious indulgence of human reason in regard to this, as well as to some other doctrines, which are clearly revealed in the word of God. We doubt not that every doctrine, and every declaration, which we find in the Bible, is perfectly *reasonable*; because we believe that the whole has proceeded from a Being whose understanding is infinite, and whose equity and truth are immaculate and inviolable. But it is one thing for a doctrine *to be reasonable*, and another for us *to see that it is so*, and to be able to explain all the grounds or principles on which it rests. There are, as I have repeatedly remarked to you, many undeniable truths, or facts, in the natural world, the principles or reasons of which we cannot understand and explain, and perhaps shall never discover in the present life. If we believe revelation to be the work of God, we ought to expect that it will contain truths and facts of the same character with those of his other works. Such truths and facts revelation certainly does contain; and this is so far from forming a just objection to the sacred writings, that it is a strong presumption of their Divine original. I know that I have repeatedly said this in substance heretofore, but it is important to remind you of it, on the present occasion.

The method of a sinner's justification before God, is a matter of pure revelation. Reason never could have discovered it, if left to itself; and the most that reason has to do with it is, to examine the evidence and import of what God has revealed concerning it. To God alone it belonged to deter-

mine on what terms and in what manner, a guilty creature might be restored to his favour: and when he has told us this, we ought most thankfully and humbly to receive the information, and promptly to comply with the terms prescribed. The grounds and reasons of the procedure may not, in all respects, quadrate with what an imperfect and erring reason may seem to dictate; nor run entirely parallel with transactions which take place between one creature and another. This I am persuaded is in reality the case, in regard to the doctrine of justification, as we find it taught in the New Testament. But what better evidence do we want that a doctrine is reasonable, although our feeble intellect cannot fully measure it, than that He whose understanding, equity and goodness are infinite, has sanctioned it, and required us to receive it? What more should a sinner ask, than that his offended Maker should tell him in what way he may be pardoned, and be rendered eternally happy? For the guilty party to stand questioning, and insist on knowing to the bottom *how, why, and wherefore* the Creator has adopted this plan, and on what principles of reason he can show it to be right, is, in my apprehension, a gross and impious presumption. I seriously warn you against it. I feel bound solemnly to caution you against all those speculations—and I am sorry to say that they are becoming fashionable—which really go to set aside the scripture doctrine of our justification solely by the imputation to us of the perfect righteousness of a Saviour; of a Saviour taking the sinner's place, and obeying and suffering in his behalf. Cleave to this scriptural doctrine, I entreat and charge you—cleave to it as the sheet anchor of that hope toward God, which alone will stand the test in the trying hour of death, and when the dread realities of eternity shall sweep away the sandy foundation of all those refuges of lies, to which thousands betake themselves to their eternal undoing.

2. Above all, let me exhort you not to content yourselves with a mere *rational assent* to this doctrine, although you should hold it in the most unexceptionable form in which the

human mind can receive it. Remember that it is a dreadful thing, to "hold the truth in unrighteousness." It is not enough that you believe that nothing can justify you but the righteousness of Christ; you must personally, practically, and individually, so believe in Christ, that you may be clothed with his righteousness, may stand before God in this heavenly robe, and be able to plead it truly, as the sole meritorious cause of your acceptance. Without this, you will at last be undone and perish forever. If there is one doctrine in the book of God more practical than another, it is this one. Each of us is a sinner by nature and by practice; and till we have, under a due sense and conviction of guilt been driven away from every other reliance, to rely, in the exercise of a living faith, solely and unreservedly on the finished righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, the wrath and curse of God abide upon us. Till then the whole weight and burden of our numerous and aggravated sins rest on our own guilty heads. Hasten then, as for the life of your souls, to embrace that Saviour, whose blood can fully atone for your transgressions, can cleanse away all the guilt of your crimson and scarlet stains; and by union with whom, all the benefits of his purchase shall become your own, and he "be made of God unto you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Amen.

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## LECTURE XXIX.

### *What is Adoption?*

THE second benefit of effectual calling, or rather the source of *many* benefits, is adoption. "Adoption," says the Catechism, "is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God."

Here we are first to consider the import of the word *adoption*. It is a term taken from a human transaction, to illustrate a divine procedure in reference to redeemed sinners.

Among men, adoption is the taking of a stranger into a family, and considering and treating him, in all respects, as if he were by birth a child of that family; or, it is our acting toward the child of another as if he were our own. In like manner, in the adoption of God, those who are by nature aliens, are received into his family, and treated as his children and heirs—"Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." Here however we remark some important circumstantial differences. Men seldom adopt more than one individual; and the act generally takes place on account of some amiable properties or qualifications of which, it is supposed, indications are perceptible in the person adopted. But God adopts *many* into his family, and not one of them on account of any thing excellent or recommendatory in the adopted party, but solely from his own unmerited love and mercy:—"Having (says the apostle) predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will; to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

The writers on this subject mention two kinds of adoption, *general* and *special*; and the scripture warrants the distinction. General adoption relates to communities. It is the forming of a certain number of mankind into a visible church, or family of God, and conferring upon them peculiar privileges. This was, in ancient times, most remarkably exemplified in the descendants of faithful Abraham, who formed the Israelitish nation. Hence, says the Apostle Paul, speaking of his kinsmen according to the flesh—"Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises: Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever—Amen." The same apostle elsewhere teaches us,

that under the gospel dispensation all true believers are to be regarded as the spiritual seed of Abraham.

But it is to what is called *special adoption*, that the answer of the Catechism before us particularly refers; and to this we shall direct all our additional remarks. Fisher, in his Catechism, well defines special adoption thus—"It is a sovereign and free translation of a sinner of mankind, from the family of hell or Satan, into the family or household of God, with an investiture into all the privileges of the sons of God." He says that this is done "by the act and authority of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: That the act of the Father in this matter is—that he hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will: That the act of the Son, in this special adoption is—that, in consequence of his purchasing the sinner by the price of his blood, he actually gives the power, right or privilege, to become a child of God, in the day of believing: That the act of the Holy Ghost is—that he comes in Christ's name, takes possession of the person, and dwells in him, as a spirit of adoption, teaching him to cry Abba Father."

You will observe that adoption is called *an act*, because it is perfected at once. As soon as a believer is vitally united by faith to Christ, the head of God's family, and the elder brother of every saint, he is, from that moment, an adopted child of God. It is called an act of *God's free grace*, because the adoption of any individual or portion of mankind into the household of God, must flow entirely from undeserved love and favour in Him; since, in their previous state, those who are adopted are, without exception, wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;—every way unworthy of being so nearly and tenderly related to Him.

The answer before us, as you will remark, states, that believers are "received into the number of the sons of God." This number of the sons of God, is constituted by all the individuals who compose the whole body of the elect, both angels and men: For holy angels are also denominated the sons of God; as in Job, where it is said—"the morning stars sang

together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” Holy angels, however, are the sons of God, so to speak, by *birth*, and not by *adoption*. They have retained that sinless and happy state in which they were at first created: And it may be proper to observe, that this also was the state of Adam before his fall. Possibly you may never have remarked the force and beauty of St. Luke’s concluding declaration, in tracing the genealogy of our Saviour. Having carried it up, and told of whom every individual mentioned was the son, till he comes to Adam, he says of him, that he was *the son of God*. The meaning is, not only that God created him, but that, creating him in his own image, in his moral likeness, Adam was properly, and in every view a son of God—a child resembling his parent.

By his fall man lost the moral likeness of his Creator, cast himself out of God’s family, became a child of the devil, and an heir of hell. To the second Adam we are entirely indebted for repairing the losses of the first. Christ Jesus has redeemed his people from sin and perdition; and when they become united to him, they are again received into the number of the sons of God, by *adoption*. It is in regeneration that the moral image of God, which was entirely lost or effaced by the fall, is partially restored, and its complete restoration ensured. Hence the sons of God are *qualified* to belong to his family, at the same time that they are adopted into it. They are “born of God” by regeneration, when they are received into the number of his sons by union with Christ—Mark how these two blessings are connected together by the inspired writer—“To as many as received him (i. e. Christ) to them gave he power to become *the sons of God*, even to them that believe on his name; which *were born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” It is, you perceive, by the instrumentality of faith, receiving Christ, that man comes by adoption into God’s family.—“Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus”—says the apostle expressly. Faith unites us to Christ, and recognises in the redemption purchased by him, the whole merito-

rious cause of adoption: Hence it is said—"God sent forth his Son—to *redeem* them that were under the law, that we might receive *the adoption of sons.*" The adoption of believers is made known to themselves, by their receiving the Spirit of adoption. "For (says the apostle) ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father: The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."

The Spirit of adoption is, in itself, one of the many precious and invaluable *privileges of the sons of God*, which are mentioned in the answer before us. Another of these privileges is, the *high dignity and honour*, to which they are advanced. They are constituted "kings and priests unto God and the Father." They are denominated "a royal priesthood;" and they are even permitted to feast on "Christ, their passover, sacrificed for them." Another privilege is, *the glorious liberty* of the children of God; by which they are freed from the guilt and dominion of sin, the curse of the law, the tyranny of Satan, and the sting of death; and know the pleasures of a filial and reverential obedience to their Father's will; flowing from a principle of faith and love wrought in the soul. They have also freedom of access to God; so that they may come to him with a holy boldness, and spread all their wants before him, with the assurance of a gracious audience and acceptance. Another of the privileges of adoption which the sons of God enjoy is, *chastisement for their good*. However the ungodly world may sneer at the idea that chastisement, or correction, should be represented as *a privilege*, there is perhaps no child of God who will not be ready to declare that he has found it such in his own experience;—declare that he numbers the seasonable and sanctified chastisements of his heavenly Father, among the greatest privileges and blessings that he has ever known. Certain it is, that there is no truth more clearly and fully taught than this, in the sacred oracles. Thus the holy psalmist—"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but

now have I kept thy word—It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes”—and thus, extensively, the apostle to the Hebrews—“My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” Another chief privilege of the sons of God by adoption is, the *inheritance* to which they are entitled. They are heirs of the righteousness which is by faith; heirs of the grace of life; heirs of all the promises of God; heirs of salvation; and to say all in a word, joint heirs with Christ of all that he has purchased for his people—of “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them.”

In closing what I have to offer on the subject of adoption, let me inculcate—

1. The importance, to every one who hopes that he is a child of God, of examining the evidences of his adoption. To assist in this examination, I will just specify some of the chief of these evidences—they are these—The children of God resemble their Father; they bear his image. They love what he loves, and hate what he hates. They know their Father’s voice—“my sheep know my voice.” They are greatly concerned for the honour of God—His cause is their cause. They delight in communion with God—“Our fellowship is with the Father.” They mourn the absence, and love the

sensible presence of God—"Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee." They conscientiously endeavour to obey all the commands of God. They love all that bear their Father's likeness—"every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him—We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren."

2. From what has been said on the adoption of believers, and the relation which subsists between them and their Father in heaven, we may be impressively taught, how false is the estimate which the world in general makes of the characters of men. Royal birth, noble blood, heroic actions, and splendid achievements of whatever kind, elevate men, in the eye of the world, to a proud eminence above the rest of their kind. Yet many who boast of these distinctions, are visibly and pre-eminently the enemies of God. To be a child of God is infinitely a greater honour—it raises the man who possesses this character to an elevation incomparably higher, than any which the world can confer. So, undoubtedly, it appears to holy angels; so it will appear to the universe in the day of judgment; and so it will now appear, to every Christian in the lively exercise of faith. The adopted child of God may pity and pray for splendid sinners, but he must act very much beside his privilege and below his dignity, if he ever envies them. In speaking on this subject, the pious Mr. Shaw, in his treatise, entitled "Immanuel"—a little book which I earnestly recommend to your careful perusal—has these striking thoughts—"What (says he) what an unreasonable and senseless reproach is that which this wicked world doth cast upon religious and godly men? calling them low spirited and puny people. Can a man be better spirited than with the Spirit of God? Can any thing more truly ennable a soul than a divine nature? Can a man be raised any higher than unto heaven itself?"

3. How careful should the children of God be, to walk worthy of their vocation. Do men who possess a high and delicate sense of worldly honour, or of that which they think

becomes their worldly connexions, station and character—do such men turn away with disdain, from what they think would degrade them? from every action and every association which they deem unworthy of their rank, or their avowed principles? How much more careful ought the child of God to be, in sustaining the purity and dignity of his character? a character which, in a right estimation, is, as we have seen, far superior to the most elevated on earth. How careful should this child of the Highest be, to remember that he is to be constantly “clothed with humility,” as his brightest ornament; to remember that he is not his own, but is bought with a price, even with the precious blood of his redeeming God —of Christ, his elder brother; that his bosom is a temple of the Holy Ghost, which must not be polluted by the indulgence of the lusts of the flesh, or of any base, defiling, or unhallowed affections or desires; to remember that, whenever assailed by temptation, he must say with Joseph, “how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God;”—to remember, in fine, that he is *one* with Christ; that angels are his fellow servants now, and are to be his companions in heaven; that heaven is his home, and therefore that he should constantly live above the world, and be little affected by its flatteries or its frowns. So living, he who has received the privilege of adoption will “walk worthy of God, who hath called him unto his kingdom and glory.” Amen.

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## LECTURE XXX.

### *What is Sanctification?*

WE are now to consider the important subject of SANCTIFICATION. “Sanctification,” says the catechism, “is the work of God’s free grace; whereby we are renewed in the whole man, after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and to live unto righteousness.”

You are aware that the word *sanctification*, denotes our being rendered holy, or free from sin. It is called *a work*, because it is not, like an act, completed at once; but is continued, progressively, through the whole of life. It is called a work of *God's free grace*, because God is the agent by whom it is performed, and his free grace is displayed in effecting it—inasmuch as there is not an individual who is the subject of it, but might have been justly left to perish in his sin and pollution.

It is the special and official work of the Spirit of God, to sanctify the human soul—We are chosen to salvation, “*through sanctification of the Spirit*, and belief of the truth.” Truth, God’s revealed truth, is the instrument made use of, and the means employed are numerous and various; but the great agent who uses them all is the Holy Spirit, without whom they never would, or could, produce the intended effect; and therefore sanctification is strictly and properly his work.

At the time of the Protestant reformation, and for some time afterwards, the reformers took great and laudable pains, to show clearly the difference between justification and sanctification, which had been wretchedly confounded in the dark ages which preceded. But these two things are, to this day, extremely apt to be taken the one for the other, at least in part; and there is scarcely any thing that has a more pernicious influence in preventing a clear and consistent view of the gospel plan of salvation. Indeed the immediate *practical* influence of confounding justification and sanctification, is often not a little injurious. Fisher in his catechism, has, I think, well and clearly illustrated the difference between these two graces. I will state what he says, with a few changes of terms, and some abbreviations and additions; and I beg your particular attention to the statement.

The matter of justification is the righteousness of Christ; but the matter of sanctification is grace imparted from the fulness of Christ—“ Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” Justification changes a man’s state in rela-

tion to God ; sanctification changes his own personal state—changes his heart and his life. Justification is effected by the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us ; sanctification by the implantation of his grace in us. Justification is complete and perfect at first ; but sanctification is carried on gradually, from less to more, till the soul be ripe for glory. The righteousness of justification is strictly and properly meritorious, being the righteousness of God, whereby the law is not only fulfilled but magnified ; but the righteousness of sanctification is not meritorious, being only the righteousness of a sinful creature, imperfect in degree. Justification is equal in all believers ; but all believers are very far from being equally sanctified. Sanctification is implanted in the believer as a new nature ; whereas his justifying righteousness is not *in* him as a nature, but *on* him as a robe, and hence it is said to be “ UPON all them that believe.” Justification has relation to the law as a covenant, and frees the soul from it ; sanctification respects the law as a rule, and makes the soul breathe after conformity to it, and to delight in it after the inward man—Hence justification is a judicial sentence, absolving us from the condemnation of the law ; but sanctification is a spiritual change, fitting and disposing us to obey the law. Justification springs from, and is grounded on, the priestly office of Christ, whereby he satisfied law and justice as our surety ; but sanctification proceeds from the kingly office of Christ, whereby he subdues us to a sweet obedience to himself, and writes his law in our hearts. Justification gives a title to heaven and eternal life ; sanctification gives a meetness for it. Justification is God's act, pronouncing our persons righteous in Christ, and taking away the guilt of sin ; sanctification is the Spirit's work, cleansing our nature and taking away the filth of sin : by the former we are instated into the favour of God, and by the latter we are adorned with his image, and made to bear a measure of his likeness.

So much for the difference between justification and sanctification.

You will recollect that, in speaking on the subject of effec-

tual calling, I described the great work of regeneration which is wrought in the human soul, by the Holy Spirit—Perhaps you can hardly have a better general idea of sanctification, than by saying, that it is that work carried on to perfection, by the same almighty agent. Among the many false notions in regard to religion which obtain among those who pay a degree of attention to it, you will sometimes find this—not perhaps openly avowed, or systematically defended, but yet practically influential—that regeneration *completes* the work of religion in the soul—No my young friends, it only *begins* the work. Regeneration is indeed essential. It is connected with justification and Christian perseverance—It may well, therefore, be matter of joy, and be highly esteemed. Yet in itself, it is only the commencement of true piety. As regeneration means a new birth, it is not proper to say that it must be repeated or increased. But it is proper to say, that every saint who continues in life, must be *renewed* more than he is in regeneration. He is then only born into the kingdom of grace—and as, in a natural sense, an infant must not only be born, but also grow and increase till he becomes a man; so, in a spiritual sense, he that is born again, must grow and increase much, before he reaches the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Jesus Christ—This growth is *sanctification*. It is an increasing renovation—a growing conversion and conformity of the soul to God. “We are renewed (says the catechism) after the image of God.” As sanctification increases, that moral image of our Maker which was lost or obliterated by the fall, is retraced, and progressively restored to the sanctified soul. As it becomes more holy, it of course becomes more like God, till, in the article of death, the saint becomes perfectly sanctified, or in his measure “holy as God is holy.”

The answer before us states, that the saint is *renewed in the whole man*. Our bodies, strictly speaking, are not capable of holiness. Yet they may be the instruments either of a holy or a sinful mind; and as the mind is sanctified, all the members of the body become the instruments of holy mental

acts—They are, like the vessels of the ancient sanctuary, appropriated to holy purposes, and therefore considered as holy in themselves. Hence the apostolick injunction, “yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness,”—and elsewhere he says—“I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Thus are saints renewed in the whole man—every faculty is sanctified, and yet, in each, this sanctification is imperfect till death.

Agreeably to the statement in the answer before us, the work of sanctification is carried on in two ways—By our *dying unto sin*; and by our *living unto righteousness*: And you will observe that in reference to both of these, we must be constantly *enabled* by divine aid. We can never form such habits of holiness, or make such attainments in it, as to be independent of constant assistance from the Spirit of grace. After the greatest progress in sanctification, the saint is not sufficient of himself for any good thought or act. He incessantly depends on grace, to be imparted for the discharge of every duty;—depends on it as the streams depend on the fountain.

*To die unto sin*, is to have the power of sin in our nature so far mortified, as not to delight in it, but to hate it in heart, and abstain from it in life. *To live unto righteousness*, is to have our souls so quickened by the vivifying power of grace, as to love and obey the commands of God, truly, heartily, prevalently, and perseveringly. And *both of these*, in every sanctified soul, will take place *more and more*. The sanctified person will be still making gradual advances in the divine life. Some advance much more rapidly than others; but none who are sanctified fail to “grow in grace.” There may, indeed, be seasons when they do not grow, but decline; when they do not make progress, but backslide, or stumble and fall. But the Spirit of grace will never forsake his own work. The declensions, falls and backslidings, of those who are truly sanctified, are overruled to render them

more careful, more steadfast, and more rapid in their progress, afterwards.

On the whole, then, the indispensable necessity of sanctification may be stated thus—It is necessary, not in the matter of our justification before God, but for evidencing our justification both to ourselves and others. It is necessary for glorifying our Heavenly Father, and showing forth his praise; for adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour; for proving our union with Christ; for promoting inward peace and joy; for maintaining fellowship and communion with God; for stopping the mouths of gainsayers; for making us useful to men on earth; and for qualifying us for heaven; because “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

The marks of sanctification are—a cordial respect to all God’s commandments—loving them because they are holy; a hatred of all sin, and avoiding the appearance of evil; a spirit of watchfulness and warfare against sin; a delight in doing good; communion with God; a conversation becoming the gospel; an habitual use of the precious promises of God, particularly with a view to increasing holiness; and a constant improvement of the blood of Christ, by faith and prayer, for cleansing from the filth, as well as the guilt of sin.

The chief motives and inducements to sanctification are, the will of God commanding it; the love of Christ constraining to it; the inherent excellence of the thing itself; an abhorrence of sin, which is its opposite; and the dignity of resembling God, to whose image it conforms its possessor.

To promote sanctification, we should cleave to Christ by faith, for we are “sanctified in Christ Jesus;” we should pray earnestly for the Spirit of sanctification, for by his aid and influence alone the deeds of the body can be mortified; we should associate with the saints, for association begets assimilation; and we should make a right and diligent use of all God’s ordinances—the dispensation of his word, his sabbaths and sacraments, and the mercies and chastisements of his holy hand. Amen.

## LECTURE XXXI.

*What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from Justification, Adoption and Sanctification?*

My young friends,—You have heard an explanation of the great and interesting doctrines of justification, adoption and sanctification. In the answer of the Catechism that follows, the effects of these graces on the practical Christian, are thus traced out—“The benefits which, in this life, do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are, assurance of God’s love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.” Here are *five* benefits, springing from the sources specified. A whole lecture might be spent on each, but we must endeavour to bring the whole within the limits of the one on which we have entered.

“Assurance of God’s love,” is the first benefit which the answer states, as flowing, in this life, from justification, adoption and sanctification. By assurance of God’s love here, we are to understand an undoubting persuasion in the minds of believers, grounded on evidence furnished by God, that they are the objects of his special love. That many of the scripture saints did attain to this assurance, we have unequivocal evidence. Holy Job speaks on this subject without doubt—“*I know that my Redeemer liveth.*” Asaph in like manner—“God is the strength of my heart, and my *portion forever.*” The Apostle Paul to the like effect—“I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand—I *know in whom I have believed,*” &c. And that this attainment was not peculiar to inspired men, but ought to be humbly desired and sought after by Christians in general, we learn from its being spoken of in scripture as something to which all believers may aspire; although it is not represent-

ed that all actually acquire it, or that our salvation depends on its acquisition. Yet it certainly is represented as an object which all should aim at, and which some do in fact obtain. The Apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, calls it once, “the full assurance of hope;” and in another instance, “the full assurance of faith;” and in both cases he recommends it, as an attainment for which all believers should earnestly strive. The Apostle John wrote his first epistle, as he says towards the close, with a leading view to enable Christians to learn the *certainty* of their state—“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may *know* that ye have eternal life.” And he also says—“He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself.” The Apostle Peter expressly enjoins—“Give all diligence to make your calling and election *sure*.”

In addition to this scripture testimony, consider, also, the nature of the subject. The point directly in view is, that the assurance we speak of flows from justification, adoption, and sanctification. Now, suppose a person to have satisfactory evidence that he is justified before God through the imputation of the Saviour’s righteousness; that he is adopted into the family of God; and that he is sanctified by the Holy Spirit,—suppose he has satisfactory evidence of all this, and assurance of the love of God will necessarily flow from it, or be its certain consequence. The fact is, that assurance always is, and must be, derived from this source. It is moreover proportioned to the clearness of the evidence we have, that we are in a justified, adopted, and sanctified state. If that evidence is full and complete, assurance of God’s love will be full and complete likewise—If that evidence be dubious, we shall also be dubious whether we are the objects of God’s love. For although it may not be proper, strictly speaking, to say that there are degrees of assurance, yet in regard to the subject before us, it is not only true, but of much importance to be remembered, that the *hope* of a Christian that he is in favour with God, may exist in a great varie-

ty of degrees—from those first drawings which only save from despair, to that prevailing hope of salvation, which is the general attainment and consolation of Christians; and so on to that full assurance of hope, of which the Apostle speaks, and which the answer before us contemplates—It is, I repeat, of importance to know and remember, that this blessed *hope* may exist in a great variety of degrees, of which the highest only is *assurance*. It is also to be noted, that the same Christians may have different degrees of hope at different times, and that assurance itself may be repeatedly lost and regained.

There are two ways in which we may have such clear evidence of our justification, adoption, and sanctification, that the assurance of God's love may flow from it. The first arises from the influences of Divine grace, *immediately* and powerfully communicated to the soul. The believer then, so sweetly, and unreservedly, and sensibly, commits his soul to Christ, that he cannot doubt that he does it: the Spirit of adoption breathes on his soul, and he cries “Abba Father:” the Spirit of sanctification raises in him the abhorrence of all sin, and an ardent hungering and thirsting after perfect holiness—From all this the assurance of God's love necessarily and immediately flows—or rather it often accompanies, and is to be considered as itself a gift of the holy and blessed Spirit.

The second way in which the assurance of God's love may be obtained is, by a careful, close, persevering, and prayerful examination of our religious exercises—our state of heart and life; and by comparing the whole with what the word of God lays down as marks and evidence of a gracious state; and thus, by the aids of the blessed Spirit, forming a sound and satisfactory conclusion, that we are truly in the love and favour of God. The former of these has sometimes been called the sensible assurance of God's love; the latter the assurance of faith. We may lawfully pray with submission, for either; or for both. But it is the latter, or the assurance of faith, which we are chiefly to look for. The following ques-

tions and answers from Fisher's Catechism, may afford useful instruction on this subject.

*“Question.* What may afford comfort to a believer, when at any time he loses this assurance?

*Answer.* That the covenant stands fast with Christ, Psalm lxxxix. 28: that the love of God, is invariably the same, Zeph. iii. 17; and that he will in his own time return with wonted loving kindness, Isa. liv. 7, 8.

*Q.* What is incumbent on believers for *recovering* the assurance of God's love, when they have lost the present sense of it?

*A.* To be humbled for sin, as the procuring cause of the Lord's departure, Psalm xl. 12; to justify God and to condemn themselves, Dan. ix. 7, 8; and to wait in the exercise of prayer and fasting, for the returns of his love, Isa. viii. 17.

*Q.* Of what advantage to believers is the assurance of God's love?

*A.* It animates to the practice of every commanded duty, Psalm cxix. 32; it supports under all trials and afflictions, Psalm xxiii. 4; and it fills the soul with the love of God *because he first loved us*, 1 John iv. 19.

*Q.* How may we know if we have the well grounded assurance of God's love?

*A.* If it flow from faith acted on Christ in the promise, Eph. i. 13; if it fill the soul with an humble and holy wondering at the condescending goodness of God, 2 Sam. vii. 18; and if it beget ardent desires after nearer conformity to God here, and the full enjoyment of him hereafter, 1 John iii. 2, 3.

*Q.* What is the difference betwixt a *true assurance* of God's love, and a false and presumptuous confidence?

*A.* *True assurance* makes a man more humble and self-denied, Gal. ii. 19, 28; but presumptuous confidence puffeth up with spiritual pride and self-conceit, 2 Kings x. 15, 16; the one excites to the practice of every commanded duty, Psalm cxix. 32; but the other encourages sloth and indolence, Luke xi. 21; the man who has true assurance wants

to be searched and tried, as to the reality thereof, Psalm xxvi. 1, 2; but they who are stuffed with presumptuous confidence hate the light, *neither come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved*, John iii. 20."

We now proceed to consider the second benefit which, in this life, accompanies or flows from the graces we contemplate. This is, "*peace of conscience.*" Peace of conscience is that inward quiet and tranquillity of the mind, which proceeds from a conviction that all our sins are pardoned and blotted out for the sake of Christ, and that God is truly reconciled, and in friendship with the soul—"Being justified by faith, (says the apostle,) we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." It may well be said that this peace accompanies and flows from justification, adoption, and sanctification, because "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." None can have true peace of conscience who are not justified, adopted, and sanctified.

Peace of conscience flowing from justification, is experienced when the conscience, being sprinkled with the blood of Christ, is set free from all fear of the deserved wrath of God; and what a precious benefit this is, can be fully known only to those who have felt the fear, and known this blessed peace as succeeding to it. Again—Peace of conscience flows from adoption, when we have soul quiet and composure, in the firm faith that God is our friend and Father in Christ Jesus. Once more—Peace of conscience accompanies sanctification, when the blessed Spirit shines on the soul of the saint, warming it to the love of holiness, and assisting and comforting it in the performance of duty.

A chief cause why some truly and even eminently pious persons do not enjoy more peace of conscience than they actually possess, is, because they seek it more than they ought from sanctification, and less than they ought from justification. Luther has given an admirable explanation of this, in his commentary on the epistle to the Galatians. God forbid that we should make any approach to the delusion of the Antinomians, or speak a word in disparagement of sanctification.

He who talks of inward peace, while he allows himself in sin, is a hypocrite. At the same time, it is an unquestionable truth, that sanctification, in the present life, is imperfect in the best; and that the more of it we have, the clearer shall we see, and the more deeply feel and bewail, the remainders of sin and depravity. This being the case, if we seek peace of conscience, only or chiefly from this source, it must of necessity be very imperfect. But the righteousness of Christ is perfect and complete, and when the soul ventures itself fully and sweetly on him, it must have the sense of pardoned sin and peace of conscience, as the consequence. And here, if I mistake not, is the real cause of that want of inward peace which many of God's dear people experience. They seek it legally—Let them indeed press earnestly after sanctification; but let them seek peace of conscience chiefly from the blood of Christ. A stated warfare against all known sin, a constant fear of offending God, and a sincere endeavour to please him, constitute the scriptural evidence of our being entitled to derive that peace of God which passeth all understanding, from the peace speaking blood of Jesus.

The third benefit mentioned in the answer, as flowing from the Christian graces we have considered is—"Joy in the Holy Ghost." Joy in the Holy Ghost (says Fisher) is that inward elevation and enlargement of soul, which flows from the lively exercise of faith, feasting on Christ in the promise. "In whom (says the apostle Peter) though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory." This joy receives its denomination from the Author of it, the Comforter, or Holy Ghost—"I will pray the Father, (said our Lord, in his last intercessory prayer on earth) and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you." Accordingly the apostle Paul declares, that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The mat-

ter or ground of this joy is, that God, in Christ, is the everlasting portion of the believing soul. This joy is described in scripture as a hidden joy, a permanent joy, and an unspeakable joy—The peculiar seasons of this joy are “the times of special manifestation after a dark night of desertion; the time of tribulation for Christ’s sake; the time of God’s remarkable appearance for his church; and sometimes, in and about the time of death.” It is, however, not to be understood, that this holy joy is confined to such seasons; or that it may not be experienced at other times. But as there are some who talk of joys in religion amounting even to raptures, who too evidently show that all their exercises are either pretended or delusive, it is to be carefully remembered, that the genuine joy of which I have now spoken, while it does indeed enliven and enlarge the soul, does also deeply humble it, and promote the work of sanctification in it—The true joy of the believer, by its humbling, sanctifying, and quickening effects, distinguishes itself from all the false joys of fanaticism and hypocrisy.

The fourth benefit flowing, in this life, from justification, adoption, and sanctification, is *increase of grace*. By this we are to understand the gradual advances which true believers are enabled to make in a holy temper, in the actual exercise of the Christian graces, and in all the duties of practical godliness. This increase of grace is compared, in Scripture, to “the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” The vital spring of a believer’s growth in grace, is his union with Christ, and the reception of life-giving influences from him. “I am the vine, (said Christ) ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.” From this you see how growth in grace is connected with justification. That union with Christ, from which justification proceeds, is also the source of growth in grace; so that the one must always accompany the other.

An interest in all the promises of the covenant of grace, which follows adoption, is also deeply concerned in a growth

in grace. Hence, says the Apostle Peter—"As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

We have already seen that sanctification is a progressive work; and progress in sanctification is precisely what we mean by an increase of grace. Of course, the remark made when speaking of sanctification, is applicable here—that although there is an increase on the whole, yet there are seasons in which the Christian's progress is arrested; nay, in which for a time he is losing instead of gaining, in the divine life. Yet even these seasons of barrenness and backsliding, like the cold blasts of winter, which restrain vegetation and destroy its appearance, are the very reason that on the return of the warmth of spring, the growth is more rapid, and the fruit more abundant. The falls of both David and Peter, were manifestly overruled to promote their after steadfastness, humility, and more rapid progress in holiness. A painful apprehension and sense of barrenness, is not always an unprofitable state for the believer. At the very time when the trees in the garden of God seem to be dying, they are often only striking their roots the deeper in humility and Christian experience—that they may afterwards put forth fairer blossoms, and yield a richer and more plentiful crop of fruit. Christians often mistake their own case, by thinking only of one kind of growth, when there are, in reality, various kinds. A believer sometimes increases in the vigorous exercise of particular graces; sometimes in a general holy temper; sometimes in active services for God, and in doing good to men; sometimes in heavenly mindedness and contempt of the world; sometimes in self-emptiedness and deep self-abasement. Now, although a Christian may want those sweet consolations and flows of affection, which sometimes he has had, yet if he be growing in humility, self-denial, and a sense of his entire dependance on the Lord Jesus Christ, he is still a growing Christian,—he increases in grace. When Christians cannot perceive their growth, they are sometimes led to doubt whether they have any grace at all. But if they

are conscious of self-loathing on account of sin; if they have a desire of grace; if they prize Christ above all things; and if they love his people for his sake, their doubts and fears are groundless—They are not destitute of the principle of spiritual life, although it may be less operative, or less perceptible, than they could wish.

The last benefit resulting to believers in this life, from justification, adoption, and sanctification, is *perseverance in grace to the end of life*. It is, my dear youth, the doctrine of our church, that those who are justified, adopted, and sanctified, never fall, totally and finally, from grace. We believe that the perseverance of the saints is infallibly secured by the immutability of electing love; by an indissoluble union with Christ; by the merit of his purchase; by the prevalence of his intercession; by the indwelling of his Spirit; and by the power of a promising God. Quotations from scripture, bearing fully and fairly on each of these points may, we think, be easily and abundantly adduced. Our time, at present, forbids me to detail them to you—I will mention but one—The Apostle Peter, speaking of the believers in general, to whom he wrote, says of them expressly—“Who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time”—And here you will remember, what I have before stated, that it is expressly declared, that whom God justifies, them he also glorifies—To suppose a soul to be justified, pardoned, adopted into the family of God, and sanctified by his Spirit; and after all to be suffered again to become the slave of sin and Satan, be entirely thrown out of the favour of God, and be eternally lost, is, in our apprehension, one of the grossest absurdities and inconsistencies imaginable: And what is worse, it seems to be a reflection on the wisdom and power, as well as the goodness and faithfulness of the Deity—that he should begin and carry on to a certain length such a glorious work, and yet never complete it, but suffer the adversary to wrest his own sheep out of the hand of their great Shepherd. We cannot believe this—we believe that the final perseverance of the saints, certainly ac-

companies and flows from justification, adoption, and sanctification.

That there have been hypocrites in religion, who have abused this doctrine—as they do every doctrine—we admit. But what is the chaff to the wheat? The doctrine, by those who understand it and treat it according to its legitimate import, is not abused. How can it be? The doctrine is, that the saints will persevere in grace. If they do not persevere, they of course are not saints, and are entitled to no hope of salvation. The saints, we hold, may fall. But while they are in a *fallen* state, they lose their evidence of being in a *safe* state; and can never have it restored, but by reformation and repentance. Remember, I repeat, it is perseverance in *grace* that we hold, and you will see that the doctrine can never lead to licentiousness. But surely it must be, and certainly is, a most desirable and encouraging circumstance, that when a believer obtains evidence that he is *now* in a gracious state, he also has evidence that he will *always* continue in that state, and will not, after all, be eternally lost.

We freely admit, that there have been many who have made a very zealous profession of religion, who did not persevere in it to the end, but became apostates, infidels, and profligates. But the fair conclusion from this fact is, that these apostates *never were* what they pretended and professed to be. And you should particularly observe, that this is the very account which the Apostle John gives of this subject—Speaking of certain corrupt men in his time, he says—“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they would **NO DOUBT** have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” If it be objected to this doctrine, that St. Paul himself says, that “he kept under his body and brought it into subjection, lest after having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway: and that this seems to imply that he might be a castaway—We answer no—it only states that he used all those precautions, which every good man will use, to avoid danger and ensure safety.

The truth is, that it is through the influence of *a cautionary fear*, as a principal mean, that God preserves his people. They are afraid of sin and of a declension in grace; not because they doubt the perseverance of the saints, but because they would thereby displease God, which they deeply dread, and would also lose the evidence that they now are, or ever were, in a gracious state, and thus be exposed to be finally cast away. In a word, their fear of falling is made instrumental in keeping them from what they fear. I say *instrumental*, for although many means are used, it is God who gives them all effect, and upholds his people by his power, and the constant communications of his grace. The perseverance of the saints does not, in any instance, depend on their having such a stock of grace, or having made such attainments in religion, as to ensure perseverance. By no means. Adam, in a state of sinless perfection, when standing by himself, was seduced by Satan; and beyond a doubt, the same great adversary who prevailed against him, would also prevail against any of his less perfect posterity, if they were not under the guardianship of their almighty Saviour. But they are given to him in covenant, and he has given them the assurance that he will preserve them. He has said—“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand: My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand—I and my Father are one.”

In concluding this lecture, let me entreat you to consider how unspeakably valuable—or rather, how altogether invaluable—are the benefits which, even in this life, “do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification.” If you were permitted to choose whether you would have an assurance of God’s love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end; or whether, at the expense of renouncing these, you would choose all the wealth and power and sensual pleasures which the world contains—would you not be justly chargeable with

the very madness of folly, if you should hesitate for a moment, to make sure of the former, rather than of the latter. Why then, my dear youth, will you not choose and seek the former, when you are called, in doing it, to renounce nothing that is really valuable; nothing that will diminish your present happiness—Nay, when your present happiness itself will be unspeakably increased, by making such a choice. True happiness infinitely more depends on the inward state of the mind, than on any outward circumstances. These circumstances may in appearance be of the most enviable kind, and yet he who is placed in them may, by inward disquietude and anguish, be the most wretched of mortals. This has often been seen in fact. But on the other hand, the benefits which the answer before us specifies, give such inward satisfaction, such pure, and permanent delight, such soul filling pleasure, that their possessor cannot be rendered miserable by any thing outward. They have put the language of holy ecstasy and triumph into the mouths of martyrs, when they have ascended the scaffold or been consumed at the stake. Make it then your first and great concern—view it, as it is indeed, the one thing needful—to secure, each for himself, a share in these benefits. To lead you to this, is the object of all my addresses—it is the great purpose and scope of the blessed gospel which you so richly enjoy. Be not so foolish, so stupid, so wicked, as to lose these benefits by carelessness, by sloth, or by the love of sin. Give no peace to yourselves, till you have that “peace of God, which passeth all understanding.” Amen.



## LECTURE XXXII.

*What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?*

WE are now to consider the benefits which the people of God receive from justification, adoption, and sanctification, at the hour of death.

"The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection."

True Christians, the genuine disciples of Christ, are, in the answer before us, denominated *believers*; and they are called so because none but they, really and practically believe—none but they believe "with all the heart to the saving of the soul." An historical, speculative, or educational belief of the gospel, although infinitely preferable to deliberate or careless infidelity, because more likely to lead to saving faith, is still not the belief which is connected with the pardon of sin, and with life everlasting. The faith that is saving affects the heart, as well as the understanding—"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." True practical believers have that "faith, which worketh by love"—the faith which the gospel demands as indispensable to salvation; and therefore they are, with an emphasis which is proper and discriminating, called in the answer before us, *believers*—To all others death is the king of terrors. Death was the penalty denounced for sin; and to all who remain in their sins, and under the sentence of the violated law, this penalty in all its extent is executed, when the body dies. They have lived under the influence of spiritual death, and when the soul is separated from the body, they suffer an eternal death.

But a most happy difference distinguishes the lot of true believers. In virtue of their union with Christ, they are entirely delivered from the sentence and curse of the law, from the desert and dominion of sin. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." But from both these the believer is freed at the dissolution of the body, and hence even "the king of terrors" becomes a friend to the believer. Death is one of the articles in the inventory of his blessings; and he is enabled to triumph and say—"O death where is thy sting! O grave where is thy victory!—Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Death to believers is indeed a great gain. At death they

receive benefits from their Redeemer of the most precious kind, which, till then, they could not receive.—Their souls are then “made perfect in holiness.” Sin first contaminates the soul when it is united to the body, and the contamination will in some degree remain, while the connexion between soul and body lasts. But as we are assured that there shall in nowise enter into the New Jerusalem above, “any thing that defileth,” it is the divine constitution that all the remaining corruptions of believers shall be dropt with their bodies; and that their souls shall then be made perfect in holiness, and capable of full and uninterrupted communion with God.

This is an event after which the soul of every saint has earnestly panted. Oh how has it groaned under that body of death, which it has dragged through the whole of its spiritual life! How has it wished and struggled to get free! How has it sighed after a complete deliverance from all sin!—no more to be tormented by the risings of sinful passions, no more annoyed by unholy propensities, no more hindered in holy exercises: And all this is now completely attained—Quitting the earthly tabernacle, all sin is left behind, and the happy emancipated spirit comes forth, as pure as that which animated Adam before the fall; a spirit fitted for glory, fitted for heaven.

Our catechism affirms that the souls of believers immediately pass into glory: This position is opposed, and was intended to be so, to two gross errors—The first is, the error of those who hold that there is an intermediate state, which they denominate *purgatory*—The second, that of those who maintain that the soul after death sleeps with the body, till the resurrection. As to the first of these—the doctrine of purgatory—it is altogether a human invention, without even a colourable countenance from the word of God. There is not a sentence or a word of canonical scripture, which has even a plausible bearing on the doctrine of purgatory. That which looks the most like it, is in the first epistle of Peter, where it is said, speaking of the Spirit of Christ—“that he

went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." But the meaning of this text appears to be, that the Spirit of Christ influenced Noah, who was "a preacher of righteousness," to warn the unhappy men, whose spirits were then, and still are, in prison—to warn them of the danger which was so near them while the ark was preparing—Now, to build such a momentous doctrine as that of purgatory on a passage admitting of this construction, and on one or two others, still more violently tortured for the purpose, shows the total want of a solid foundation for the superstructure which is erected. It may also be added, that even the passages which are brought from the apocryphal writings, which are not canonical scripture, do not warrant this doctrine, as it is held and taught by the church of Rome: And indeed, some of their most able writers admit, that it has no clear foundation in the sacred oracles. It appears to have been borrowed from the heathen mythology; and although there were some earlier notions in regard to it, the doctrine, as now held by the Papists, did not receive its shape, till more than four hundred years after the death of Christ.

As to the other error I have referred to, namely, that the soul sleeps with the body from death till the resurrection, it not only has no countenance from scripture, but is, I think, directly contrary to it. Even on the principles of natural reason, and the analogy of things, the balance of evidence is against it. For although I will not affirm that the arguments in favour of the natural immortality of the soul are absolutely conclusive, yet I do think them far more plausible than those of an opposite kind. Divisibility and inaction are two essential properties of all matter; and on the other hand, indivisibility and activity seem to be essential properties of spirit: But things which differ in essential properties, cannot reasonably be supposed to be subject to the same laws. And as to appearances, we see the soul, in some cases, retaining all its powers, when the body is wasted to a shadow, and till the

very moment of dissolution. These seem to be strong indications, that the soul may act independently on the body.

But after all, it is the word of God that must decide this point. And to my apprehension it decides clearly—"To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise"—said our Lord to the penitent malefactor. Yes, say our opponents—"But one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." And did our Saviour, I ask, say "*one day*," or "*in one day*," thou shalt be with me in paradise. No—he said "*to-day*" or "*this day*"—It is the same original word, *ημερα*, rendered "*this day*," in the Lord's prayer. And it seems undeniable that he could mean no other than the *natural day* on which he spoke—for there can be no reasonable doubt that the malefactor so understood the declaration, and we cannot believe that our Lord would deceive him by an equivocal expression. No, assuredly—that very day the soul of this penitent thief was to meet, and we doubt not did meet, his Saviour, in the paradise above. As to those who would read the passage—"To-day I say unto thee"—or, "I say unto thee to-day, thou shalt be with me in paradise,"—I know not whether so gross a cavil ought even to be mentioned.—According to this arrangement of the sentence, the words "*to-day*," could have no other use than to render our Lord's declaration emphatick. But that, you will observe, had been done already—"Verily I say unto thee"—Not one of the ancient versions,\* some of them made when the Greek was yet a living language, but disproves this rendering of the original; and I am persuaded it never would have been thought on, if it had not been sought for, with a view to serve and save a favourite hypothesis.

Again—In what our Saviour says of the rich man and Lazarus, the whole representation rests on this supposition, that souls experience happiness or misery in a future world, while their bodies are sleeping in the dust. I know it is said that *this is but a parable*. The scripture, however, does not say or intimate that it is a parable. But admit the whole repre-

\* See Walton's Polyglott.

sentation to be parabolical, still it must be remembered that parables are intended to illustrate facts and truths; and every other parable that our Saviour ever spoke might, for any thing it contains, be a simple statement of facts. He never spake parables out of nature: And to suppose that he has grounded this representation on a state of things which never happens, and never can happen, is contrary to the whole tenour of our Lord's discourses. It therefore certainly does teach that souls live and act—are happy or miserable—while the bodies which they once animated, are yet in their graves.

But there is one of our Saviour's lessons of instruction, which should put this point beyond all controversy; because its whole force and meaning rest solely on the fact, that after the bodies of men are turned to dust, their spirits live and are conscious. I refer to the manner in which he silenced the Sadducees, who denied a future state altogether; though they professed to be the disciples of Moses, and to believe his writings. Our Saviour confounded these men by quoting a sentence from the writings of Moses, and making one short comment on it. The sentence is this—"I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"—Then follows the comment—"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living"—That is, plainly, God spake these words to Moses, some hundred years after Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were dead as to their bodies, and yet they were still living, as to their souls. In other words, he spake of *living men*, whose bodies had long been turned to dust. The whole pertinence, force, and meaning of our Saviour's words turn on this very point, that the patriarchs were *living*, when God spake to Moses. Here, therefore, we have our Saviour's seal set on this truth.

Agreeably to this teaching of his Divine Master, the Apostle Paul speaks of being "absent from the body, and present with the Lord." Now this, it is plain, would be absolutely impossible, if the spirit never can subsist when absent, or separated from the body. In like manner, when he says—"Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell"—he evi-

dently supposes both to be possible. It virtually falsifies his language to say—that to be out of the body is impossible; for this is one of his suppositions—a circumstance which he supposes might have taken place in fact. He also had “a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.” To depart from what? From the world certainly—and we think from the body too. But no, say our opponents—He was to depart from the world, and to sleep some three or four thousand years in the dust of death, all of which would seem but a moment, till the resurrection, and after that he should be with Christ. Is this—let common sense pronounce, for common sense is one of the best interpreters of scripture—Is this the meaning which *naturally* suggests itself when the apostle says—“I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ”—No, it is not. The words plainly import, and the apostle, there is no doubt meant, that to depart and to be with Christ, were events to take place at the same time. The two things were, in his mind, indissolubly and immediately connected.

We return from this long, but not unimportant digression, to dwell for a moment on the delightful thought, that “the souls of believers do, at death, immediately pass into glory.” The moment the connexion between the soul and the body is dissolved, the happy spirit of the saint—perhaps, like that of Lazarus, convoyed by angels—wings its way to glory. How new and interesting the state in which the emancipated spirit now finds itself! All pain, and sickness, and sorrow, and sin, left for ever behind: all danger, and doubt, and conflict, and imperfection, forever terminated: all the principles of immortal health, vigour, activity, holiness, and happiness unutterable, yielding their best and sweetest influence. Thus the soul of the believer enters into glory; a glory which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor of which the full conception hath entered the heart of man.

Yet to give us some faint idea of that which our powers at present are inadequate fully to comprehend or sustain, God hath been pleased to represent heavenly happiness to us, by a variety of emblems. It is called “a kingdom,” to denote the

fulness and extent of all spiritual and eternal good which the saints there enjoy, and the glorious dignity to which they are advanced; they are made kings and priests unto God and the Father; they receive a crown of life which fadeth not away. Heaven is also called "a house not made with hands," to denote the unspeakable glory of the heavenly mansions, beyond the most stately or splendid palaces built by the hands of men. To intimate its satisfying nature, it is called "an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." It is also denominated "a better country," to show that there is no adequate comparison between the things which are seen and temporal, and the things which are unseen and eternal.

It now only remains to take a short notice of the conclusion of the answer before us, which relates to the *bodies* of believers—"Their bodies being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection." When believers are united to Christ by faith, his union with them is with their whole persons, both soul and body; and the passages of scripture are not few, in which the bodies of the saints are represented as the peculiar property of Christ, as well as their souls. It is remarkable that when the Apostle Paul bids a kind of holy challenge, for any one to tell what shall separate the saints from their Lord, he expressly states that death shall not separate them—As their souls are immediately translated to glory, so their bodies also are considered as the present property of Christ—as members of his mystical body; and as such, after they shall have mouldered to dust, they shall certainly be raised glorious and incorruptible. "As at the death of Christ, though his human soul was separated from his body, yet neither the one nor the other was separated from his Divine person; so neither the soul nor the body of the believer shall be separated from Christ, when parted from each other by death; but both of them shall remain indissolubly united to him forever. Hence the grave, which is a prison to the wicked, where their bodies are kept in custody to the judgment of the great day, is to the saints a

place of rest. For them their Redeemer, when he entered the tomb, sweetened and hallowed it, and they are said to rest in their graves. Their graves are like beds of ease, where their bodies lie in safety, till they be joyfully awakened in the morning of the resurrection. Hence, too, their resting in the grave is expressed, in scripture, by “sleeping in Jesus;” intimating that they sleep in union with Jesus, and that his Spirit keeps possession of their dust, which he will quicken and rebuild as his temple, at the last day.”\* These ideas are expressed with equal beauty and justice by Dr. Watts, in the 18th hymn of his first book, and the 110th of the second—

Hear what the voice from heaven proclaims  
 For all the pious dead!  
 Sweet is the savour of their names,  
 And soft their sleeping bed.

They die in Jesus, and are bless'd;  
 How kind their slumbers are!  
 From suff'rings and from sins releas'd,  
 And freed from every snare.

Far from this world of toil and strife,  
 They're present with the Lord;  
 The labours of their mortal life  
 End in a large reward.

And must this body die?  
 This mortal frame decay?  
 And must these active limbs of mine  
 Lie mould'ring in the clay?

Corruption, earth, and worms,  
 Shall but refine this flesh,  
 Till my triumphant spirit comes  
 To put it on afresh.

God my Redeemer lives,  
 And often from the skies  
 Looks down and watches all my dust,  
 Till he shall bid it rise.

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\* Altered from Fisher's Catechism.

Array'd in glorious grace  
Shall these vile bodies shine,  
And every shape and every face  
Look heavenly and divine.

These lively hopes we owe  
To Jesus' dying love:  
We would adore his grace below,  
And sing his power above.

Dear Lord, accept the praise  
Of these our humble songs,  
Till tunes of nobler sound we raise  
With our immortal tongues.

My dear youth, although I have lived many more years than you, yet even since these lectures commenced, I have stood by the side of the death bed of some of your number: Nor is it improbable, although my life is more uncertain than the most of yours, that I shall stand by the death bed of some of you, who now hear me. And when I stand there, tell me, shall I witness in you the benefits which believers receive from Christ at their death? Shall I see you welcome the king of terrors? Shall I see you triumph over him? Shall I see you joyfully anticipating the approaching moment, when your souls shall be made perfect in holiness, and pass immediately into glory? Or shall I see all the reverse? O shall I see you filled with agonizing fear! Utterly unprepared to die, and yet forced to meet your Judge!—The one side or the other of this interesting alternative, you may experience, although I should not witness it. And remember, you are likely to die with joy, or with horror, according as you are, or are not, *believers*, in the sense of the answer before us. Will you not, then, seek that faith in Christ, and that union with him, which will be found so infinitely important in a dying hour, and in all the dread eternity which follows? Will you trifle away your precious time of probation, and run the risk of being summoned to death and judgment, without any preparation? Oh if I could see you seeking a saving interest in Christ!—could see you in earnest and deeply solicitous to be the Lord's—it would afford the happiest presage.

God hath said, “they that seek me early shall find me.” Seize on this promise while you may. To you it is now addressed. You are now in early life. At a more advanced age, even if you should live to such an age—as you have no certainty that you will—you will not be able *then* to plead this promise. Will not some of you, therefore—nay, will not all of you, resolve this very hour, in the strength of God, that you will begin to seek his favour in earnest; determined never to give over the suit, till you have satisfactory evidence that you are vitally united to the Lord Jesus Christ—that you have “believed on him to life everlasting.”—Amen.

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### LECTURE XXXIII.

*What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the Resurrection?*

HAVING seen, in the order in which they are exhibited in our catechism, the primitive holy and happy state of man; his loss of his original rectitude, and the miseries consequent on that loss; the provision made for his restoration in the redemption by Christ; and the rich and inestimable benefits which believers receive from that redemption, both while they live and when they die—we are now to contemplate the consummation of their felicity, at the resurrection in the last day—“At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.”

The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, is derived wholly from the Bible. The heathen had some notions of a future state of rewards and punishments, where the souls of good men would be happy, and those of bad men miserable. But they had not, in all their systems, a single trace of the doctrine, that the body is to be raised and rendered immortal.

Hence we are told that when Paul discoursed on Mars' hill, at Athens, the most distinguished city of Greece, and the most renowned for science in the pagan world—"when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked." That there should be a resurrection of the body, was an idea that had never been presented to their minds before; and as they believed themselves far superior in knowledge to a barbarous Jew—which was the character of Paul in their estimation—they could not restrain the expression of their contempt and scorn, at the promulgation of this novel, and as they esteemed it, extravagant and absurd notion. Yet it will be found, my children, that this doctrine, which human reason of itself never glanced at, commends itself to our reason, now that it is revealed: that is, it may be shown to be correspondent to those notions of the perfect equity of the Deity, which reason teaches. The *whole* of every human being, both body and soul, has been concerned in all the good or the evil done in this life: And although the body has been no more than the servant or instrument of the soul, yet it may serve to illustrate the goodness of God on the one hand, and the strictness of his justice on the other, when even that which was *instrumental* to good or evil, is connected with the proper agent, in glory or in dishonour.

As to the possibility of a resurrection, none can refuse to admit that Almighty power, by which matter was formed out of nothing at first, and by which our bodies were organized and animated before their dissolution, can reorganize and reanimate them anew, after they shall have been dissolved. There is one analogy in proof and illustration of this, constantly occurring in nature, which is noticed in scripture, first by our Lord himself, and afterwards by the Apostle Paul—It is, that grain, after it is sown, perishes utterly, before a new growth arises. Speaking of his own death and resurrection, our Lord says—"Verily, verily, I say unto you—Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." St. Paul, speaking of the general resurrection, goes more at

length into the illustration. Attend to the following passage, 1 Cor. xv. 35—44: “ But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”

The question has often been asked on this subject—how can the same particles of matter which compose the bodies that die, belong, in all cases, to the bodies which shall be raised? Human bodies, it is said, turn to dust, and are converted into vegetables, on which other human beings feed: Or they are devoured by beasts, which furnish food for man: Or they are sometimes devoured even by men themselves. Hence it must happen that certain portions or particles of matter, must have belonged to two different bodies—perhaps even to a hundred—and how, it is demanded, can each of these bodies severally claim those portions which have belonged to all equally? Is the thing not an absolute impossibility? We readily admit that it is, and have with design stated the objection in all its force; because it is sometimes represented as very formidable, although in reality there is no weight in it at all. We call a tree the *same tree*, when it is ten years old, and when it is a hundred; and a man *the*

*same man*, when he is twenty, and when he is fourscore: Yet, probably, neither the tree nor the man, has, at the latter period, half the identical particles of matter, of the former period. Some parts, however, are probably never entirely changed. The scripture no where says that the same numerical particles of matter which are deposited in the grave, shall belong to the body that shall rise. Without this, as the illustrations I have mentioned sufficiently show, it may be truly said that the same body rises. Some essential parts of the body that died will rise;—enough, when united to the conscious spirit, to denominate it, in the usual acceptation of language, *the same body*. And this is all that any passage of scripture requires, to satisfy its full import.

The matter of which our bodies are composed will, it is manifest, undergo a wonderful transformation. “It is sown a natural body—It is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” This spiritual body, as the apostle denominates it, will not be subject to the laws of the natural body. It will subsist without material sustenance—It will need no supplies or repairs. It will be incorruptible and indestructible; capable of pleasures, or of pains, which our bodies, at present, could not endure. It will plainly not be subject to the usual laws of gravitation—which probably is a part of what the apostle intends, by calling it a *spiritual* body. The laws of matter, and all those which are called the laws of nature, are nothing more, as I have shown you, than another phrase for the appointment and will of God. He can change, suspend, or alter those laws, at pleasure; and in some respects, he certainly will do so, in regard to the bodies both of saints and sinners, at the resurrection.

The difference between the natural and the spiritual body, has a most beautiful illustration, in a very common process of nature; which I have sometimes thought the great Author of nature, might have appointed on purpose to illustrate this very truth. A large part of the insect tribes, are, in one period of their existence, unsightly, inactive, or crawling reptiles.

In another period of their existence, they are among the most beautiful and active beings in the animal creation. Myriads of torpid moths and worms, during winter, sleep in the earth, or are frozen on its surface; but in a few revolving weeks they are transformed, and assume bodies which shine in all the colours of the rainbow, and wing their flight through every region of the air. The transition of man, from the natural to the spiritual, or glorified state, is scarcely greater or more wonderful. The soul, like the vital principle of the insect, never dies, and at the resurrection, “God giveth it a body as it pleaseth him.” Accustom yourselves, my young friends, to observe and trace these analogies between the appearances of nature and the truths of revelation. The employment is pleasing, and it tends to piety.

Thus have I led you to consider, at some length, the general subject of the resurrection, because it does not occur again, in the compendious system of theology contained in our catechism. The remainder of the lecture will be employed in discussing, more closely, the particular points presented in the answer before us.

“At the resurrection, believers shall be raised up in glory.” The scriptures inform us, that “the dead in Christ shall rise first;” and that they shall come forth out of their graves with unspeakable joy. This precedence in the resurrection, and the unutterable joy with which the souls and the bodies of the saints shall be united, will be one glorious distinction, which they will possess over the wicked;—who will rise after them, with ineffable distress and horror.

But when it is said that believers shall be raised up in glory, there is no doubt a reference to the nature of those incorruptible, active, powerful, and spiritual bodies, with which they shall rise, and of which we have already taken some general notice; but the special reference is to the resemblance which these bodies will bear to the glorified body of their Redeemer. It is expressly and particularly stated in scripture, in regard to true believers, that Christ “shall change their

vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." The glorified body of believers, resembling that which their Lord has carried into heaven, will not only be in itself beautiful and splendid, but subject to no weariness or weakness: it will be capable of bearing an eternal weight of glory; of serving God without intermission day and night in his temple above; and of an activity and energy which shall not hinder, but help, all the exercises and exertions of the soul.

The next clause of the answer before us states, that believers "shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment." The day of judgment will immediately succeed to the resurrection. Of this day I have spoken, generally, in a former lecture; and do not mean again to go into a particular description of the circumstances of it, further than is necessary to illustrate the answer before us. It will be a day of unutterable vengeance and terror to the wicked; but a day of complete redemption and of holy joy and triumph to the righteous. They shall then be "openly acknowledged and acquitted." That is, Christ shall then *openly*, before the assembled universe, own or *acknowledge* these for his chosen people, the blessed of his Father, for whom the kingdom of heaven is prepared.

In like manner he shall *acquit* them; that is, he will not only vindicate them from all the calumnies, slanders, and aspersions, which have been cast upon them in this world, and "bring forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noon-day;" but he will publish a declarative pardon of all their sins: For it is one thing to *forgive*, and another to *publish* that forgiveness. In this life, when believers, on their union with Christ, are justified, they are indeed acquitted before God, from all the demands of the law: but as to men, this is done secretly; it is unknown to them; the whole transaction is out of the view of the world;—nay, it is sometimes not known even to believers themselves. But at the day of judgment, there shall be an open *declaration*, be-

fore God, angels and men, pronounced in the most publick and solemn manner, that each of these believers is justified by God: that he has acquitted them from the sentence of condemnation; that for the righteousness' sake of Christ, they are accepted as righteous in his sight, and are entitled to an eternity of happiness. This will be done for the greater display of the grace and glory of God; for the greater comfort and honour of the saints; and for the greater shame and confusion of their enemies, and the enemies of God. To afford a suitable occasion for this publick declaration and manifestation of the goodness of God in the redemption of his people; to exhibit their true character, and to acknowledge and honour them as his, before angels and men; and to expose the wicked in their true character, with equal publicity, and to clothe them with ineffable shame and contempt—these seem to be some of the chief purposes for which the day of judgment is appointed.

It is added in the answer before us, that after the judgment, believers shall “be made perfectly blessed, in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.”

To be perfectly blessed is to be entirely and forever exempt from all pain or uneasiness, and in full possession of all the happiness of which the soul is capable; and this, we are assured will be the happy lot of all who shall be acquitted in the final judgment. Not that we are to suppose that all glorified spirits will enjoy an equal degree of happiness. In the passage already cited, we are reminded that—“One star differeth from another star in glory,” and that “so also is the resurrection of the dead.” There will be different degrees of happiness among the saints, according to their different capacities, their attainments in grace, and their labours of love in the present life. But all will be satisfied—Cast a thousand vessels of different capacities into the ocean—all will be full, and equally full, yet no two will contain the same quantity. By this similitude, the future state of the blessed has been often illustrated.

Our Catechism instructs us that the happiness of glorified

saints will arise from “the full enjoying of God to all eternity.” God alone is adequate to satisfy the desires, or to constitute the chief good, of an immortal soul. No finite, no created being, can fully comprehend God—Extend what is finite as far as imagination can reach, still there is an immeasurable distance between it and what is infinite. Hence it is plain, that all holy and happy beings may be enlarging their capacities for the enjoyment of God to all eternity, and yet find him the same inexhaustible fountain that they did at first. Every glorified spirit will have such a perfect knowledge of him, as shall have no measure set to it, but what arises from the limited capacity of the creature;—and this capacity may still enlarge its limits, and still be filled.

We have reason to believe that an object of great delight to the bodily eyes of the redeemed in heaven, will be that glorious body which is united to the person of the Son of God. The glory of the man Christ Jesus, will be unspeakably superior to the glory of all the saints—They indeed will shine forth as the sun, but, “the Lamb shall be the light” itself of the heavenly city: And on him shall every eye turn, with admiring and adoring rapture, beholding in him the Redeemer to whom they owe their all; and seeing in the nature which he wears, the indissoluble bond of union between God and them.

But the blissful sight of God in heaven, is something more than any external, visible glory, of what kind soever. The scriptures assure us that his people “shall see God,” and “see him as he is.” The saints in heaven will see, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: not with their bodily eyes, in respect to which God is invisible; but with the eyes of the understanding—being blessed with the most perfect, full and clear perceptions of him and of divine things, of which their powers are capable. Here they only “see through a glass darkly, but then face to face:” Here it is only by glimpses, and short passing views, that they behold any of his glory; but there they shall eternally, and without interruption, delight their souls with unclouded visions of him: they shall for ever

contemplate his infinite love, his unchangeable truth, and his wonderful works, with the utmost complacency and delight. They shall have a clear, distinct, and assured view, of the love which he bore to them from eternity; and will bear to them forever more. The revelations of glory will be a complete commentary on the Bible—That blessed book will be far better and more extensively understood by the saints in heaven, than it ever was on earth.

As the word, so the works of God, will then be more perfectly known than they could be in this world. The saints' knowledge of the material creation, and of all sensitive beings, will then be brought to perfection, and it will be seen that “in wisdom he hath made them all.” Believers will also then behold the chequered web of Divine Providence completely unravelled; and will see that there was a necessity for all the trials and afflictions of this mortal state. But the chief matter of their eternal admiration will be, the glorious work of redemption. They will forever wonder and praise, and praise and wonder, while they contemplate the depths of wisdom and love, of goodness and holiness, of mercy and justice, of power and grace, which shine through the whole of that transcendently glorious device.

All the knowledge of the saints in heaven, will be accompanied with the highest and purest pleasure, with the utmost delight of their holy souls. God will fully and freely communicate himself to them; and the enjoyment of him will go as far as their most enlarged capacities can reach. He will admit them to a holy, unrestrained intercourse and familiarity with himself. In the language of scripture, he will “walk in them;” His fulness shall ever stand open to them; there shall be no veil between him and them; but they shall behold him in immediate vision. From this free communication, and full participation of the divine goodness in heaven, there will result to the saints who behold the face of God, a perfect likeness, according to their measure. Hence it is said “We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” Joy inconceivable will arise, not only from what is possessed, but from what

shall be eternally in prospect. The saints will know that their blessedness is to be endless—strictly eternal. Nor will the enjoyment of God produce satiety. It will be fresh and new, through the round of wasteless ages—But we are lost and overwhelmed in the contemplation.

My dear youth—The blessedness of which I have been speaking is that to which I have been seeking to lead you, in all the instruction which I have endeavoured to communicate, and in all the exhortations I have addressed to you, in these lectures on your catechism. Yes, the ultimate object of all has been to lead you to heaven; that God in Christ may be glorified in you, and that you may share with saints and seraphs, in all that unutterable and inconceivable bliss, to which your attention has just been directed. O that I could impress it on your minds!—O, rather, that God by his Spirit would effectually impress it on your consciences and hearts, that this is a *personal concern* to every individual of you! This heavenly happiness is set before *each* of you, as an object for which you are to strive, and which you must obtain; or failing to obtain it, sink to all the horrors of the pit of eternal perdition. Is it not worthy of all attention, and of all effort, and of all earnestness in prayer for the aids of Almighty grace—to escape from hell and to rise to heaven! How manifest, and how dreadful, is the infatuating power of sin—that a rational creature should need much persuasion, and that all persuasion should so often be in vain, to avoid inconceivable and interminable misery, and to secure eternal and ever increasing felicity! O let it be the present resolution of every one of you, that you will, from this moment, strive to break away from all the spells of this moral fatuity; that you will no longer listen to the syren song of sinful pleasure; that you will not lose heaven by delaying for another hour to seek it, with all the energies of your souls. Form the resolution in the strength of God, and may his grace crown your endeavours with success. Amen.







Date Due

